

"Simply superb, motivating and powerful."
Patrick Rousseau, Chairman & Managing Director, Veolia India

LOVE YOUR **MONDAYS** and Retire **YOUNG**

SIDDHARTHA SHARMA

Proven Success Principles to Identify
and Monetize Your Passion

 **SAGE**



Advance Praise

Love Your Mondays and Retire Young just might be the most important book of this decade. It has profound insights on how we should manage our professional lives, create financial freedom, and live a wholesome life. An intriguing and potentially life-altering examination of prevalent work situation that is sure to benefit all readers. This book must be read by every student and employee.

—**Anil Moolchandani**

Chairman & Managing Director
Archies Group Ltd.

Love Your Mondays and Retire Young is a passionate and persuasive appeal to think differently about our professional lives. Siddhartha brilliantly articulates the need and strategies to discover one's, passion, followed by 12 success principles for living an exceptional work-life. This is a life-changing book and will forever alter the way you look at yourself. The author just does not give the message; he lives the message. "Quitting his job to start Success Monks." Simply superb, motivating, and powerful.

—**Patrick Rousseau**

Chairman & Managing Director
Veolia Water India

Siddhartha Sharma has written an engaging and readable book that will draw readers into an extended conversation with the author and with themselves. Through this internal dialogue, they will learn that happiness and fulfilment are less about struggle than they are about setting the path that makes effort a joy. More is possible to us than we ever imagined if we take Sharma's counsel to heart.

This is a super manifesto towards designing professional lives we want to lead.

—**Mary C. Gentile, PhD**

Author of *Giving Voice to Values*

Faculty, Babson, USA

Love Your Mondays is the new science of “Professional Success.” If you want to speed forward to both massive wealth and emotional fulfilment, you must take the road of “passion.” I always knew so many people hate their Mondays, but now I truly know why. A must-read for all students, working professionals, and aspiring entrepreneurs. A well-crafted piece of success-literature and a bold call to mend the formal education system.

—**Jean-Michel Cassé**

SVP Operations

Accor India

Read it slow. Take it in. Implement. It will change your life. Profoundly insightful, yet refreshingly simple. Siddhartha’s work makes a great read. Highly recommended.

—**Goonjan Mall**

Founder, Online Prasad.com

Every parent and student should be reading this book and help end the rat race that we have degenerated into.

—**Vivek Kaul**

Author of the book *Easy Money*

Love Your Mondays makes you think about your life with a much broader perspective!! Read it with a free mind, and you will be forced ask yourself the three powerful questions that will change the way you look at your professional life. The book inspires you

without sounding pedantic, and makes you think “what’s my dream, and what will it take for me to fulfil it.”

—**Amit Kohli**

M.D. and Co-founder
Foodpanda India

Love Your Mondays and Retire Young is an engaging and insightful book looking into making your heart and minds work together towards creating complete harmony. It is a book for people who say “Thank God It’s Friday” and hate coming back to work on Mondays.

—**Rahul Saini**

Author of the bestselling book *Those Small Little Things*

For most people passion and profession is a mirage, often confusing one for the other. This book churns you internally to the point of compelling you to introspect, act decisively, and seek personal happiness. The simplicity touches your inner core.

—**Chetan Mehra**

Executive Director
JP Morgan Chase, UAE

LOVE YOUR
MONDAYS AND
RETIRE YOUNG

Thank you for choosing a SAGE product! If you have any comment, observation or feedback, I would like to personally hear from you. Please write to me at contactceo@sagepub.in

—Vivek Mehra, Managing Director and CEO,
SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, New Delhi

Bulk Sales

SAGE India offers special discounts for purchase of books in bulk. We also make available special imprints and excerpts from our books on demand.

For orders and enquiries, write to us at

Marketing Department

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd

B1/I-1, Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area

Mathura Road, Post Bag 7

New Delhi 110044, India

E-mail us at marketing@sagepub.in

Get to know more about SAGE, be invited to SAGE events, get on our mailing list. Write today to marketing@sagepub.in

This book is also available as an e-book.



LOVE YOUR MONDAYS AND RETIRE YOUNG

SIDDHARTHA SHARMA



www.sagepublications.com

Los Angeles • London • New Delhi • Singapore • Washington DC

Copyright © Siddhartha Sharma, 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

First published in 2014 by



SAGE Response

B1/I-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044, India

SAGE Publications Inc

2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320, USA

SAGE Publications Ltd

1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP, United Kingdom

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd

3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Published by Vivek Mehra for SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, Phototypeset in 11/14 Bembo by RECTO Graphics, Delhi and printed at Saurabh Printers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sharma, Siddhartha, 1984—

Love your Mondays and retire young / Siddhartha Sharma.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Job satisfaction. 2. Quality of work life. 3. Success in business. 4. Entrepreneurship. I. Title.

HF5549.5.J63S4724

650.1—dc23

2013

2013038666

ISBN: 978-81-321-1341-6 (PB)

The SAGE Team: Sachin Sharma, Shreya Lall, and Rajib Chatterjee

Cover Design By: Scotoma Vision

Dedicated to my mother—you made me who I am.

Go for It

“It must be borne in mind that
the tragedy of life doesn’t lie in not reaching your goal.
The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach.
It is not a calamity to die with dreams unfulfilled.
But it is a calamity not to dream.
It is not a disaster to be unable to capture your ideal,
But it is a disaster to have no ideal to capture.
It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars.
But it is a disgrace not to have stars to reach for.
Not failure, but low aim is a sin.”

—Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays

To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived—this is to have succeeded.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Contents

<i>Foreword</i> by Walter Vieira	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
<i>The Resignation</i>	xv
<i>Introduction: Why I Quit My Job</i>	xvii

Part One: Did I Dare to Dream?

1. Back to School	3
2. Avoid the “Herd” Mentality: Wrong Wall and the Crowded Ladder	16
3. Retire Young: Passion into Profession	30
4. Find Your True Love	41

Part Two: Did I Live My Dream?

Section One: Restoring Factory Settings

5. Excuses	65
6. Dreamicide	77
7. Luck	92
8. Denial	101
9. Scarcity Mentality	113
10. Fear	124

Section Two: Installing Passion into Profession Program

11. The Navigation Principle	139
12. The Happiness Principle	148
13. The Work–Happiness Principle	159
14. The Potential Principle	173
15. The Knowledge Principle	180
16. The Association Principle	194
17. The Skill Mastery Principle	207
18. The Internal Communication Principle	216
19. The Failure Principle	230
20. The Money Principle	241
21. The Productivity Principle	260
22. The Ownership Principle	269

Part Three: Did I Share My Dream?

23. It's All about Service	279
24. If It Ever Happens, It's up to You	288

<i>About the Author</i>	292
-------------------------	-----

Foreword

If there is one facet that comes through loud and clear in *Love Your Mondays and Retire Young* by Siddhartha Sharma, it is that it is written with passion!

Much has been written about converting your passion into profession. Those who succeed in doing this have the good fortune of “never working a day in their lives.” This is an oft-repeated quote. And yet we do not see this happen very often.

When we see it in the lives of the likes of Jamsetji Tata, M. F. Husain, Zubin Mehta, Leander Paes, Vishwanathan Anand, and many others (who may not be in the public gaze), we perhaps look at them with some envy. We feel that they are lucky, while we are not. We are born to lead our own uninteresting humdrum lives, dreading every Monday and welcoming every Friday with relief.

Siddhartha Sharma shows us that converting passion into profession is a goal that all of us can achieve—if we want to. I personally believe that a lot of people who can achieve this goal never really attempt it. After all, there is the world of sustainers and achievers; and the larger world of the former finds it more difficult to “make it happen.”

Siddhartha narrates how he forced his way at a very young age. He has written about it, covering every facet from “avoiding the herd mentality, to finding your true calling, to dealing with the numerous imagined obstacles like Excuses, Bad luck, Denial, Fear of failure.” He then lists out 12 principles which can be used to facilitate the transformation.

Bloomberg recently carried out a review of 100 richest people in the world today—2013. Out of the 100 richest, 73 are self-made (not heirs), 18 have no college degrees, 36 are children of poor parents. But they had passion for what they wanted to do. And many of them are mentioned in Siddhartha's book.

Siddhartha has done a lot of reading on the subject. And he has collected a lot of material from the hundreds of people he has interacted with as a popular motivational speaker. He has also ended his book with chapters on “sharing the dream,” which truly completes the life which has been enjoyably *and* usefully lived.

Young people and even the not so young will benefit immensely from reading this book. It may even change the direction of many lives!

Walter Vieira

Management Guru and author

Acknowledgements

This book is a result of love and inspiration I received from the wonderful people around me. I would like to thank my grandparents; parents; my siblings Rajeev, Gaurav, and Komal; my cousins; and all my family members for their never-ending love and support. I am also thankful to all my teachers who taught me both “what to write” and “how to write”—Fr. Mathew, Mr. AP Antony, Mrs. Neelam Mehrotra, Mr. Malik, Mr. Manish Magan, Mr. Yogesh Sharma, Mr. Chacko, Mrs. Sharma, Mrs. Tandon, Mrs. Beale, Ms. Sampio, Mrs. Rathod, Mrs. Dcruze, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Wilbur, Mrs. Khandelwal, Mr. Pawan, Mr. Clarence, Mr. Bonjour, and all my caring teachers.

This book would not have been possible without the support of Akanksha Channana, Sumit Dora, Saurabh Sardana, Akhil Sood, and Rahul Saini. Thanks for being there always and I am indeed very blessed to have you guys in my life. A special mention to Tarun Monga, Vinita Punia, Hemant Singh, Sukhpal Bhatti, Shyneer Narang, Mayank Arora, Devesh Mittal, Vinod Pande, Karan, Gaurav, Sumit Dubey, and Chanpreet. I am also thankful to all my school and college friends for the lifetime memories. I am thankful to Mr. Sharad Chopra, Director—Sharad Chopra & Co, for all his co-operation and support not just on this project but all the Success Monks assignments. We are grateful to Mr Vivek Sardana and Mr Surinder Lijhara for their blessings on this project.

I am thankful to my editor Mr. Sachin Sharma for all his creative inputs and to the entire team of SAGE Publications for their belief in this project. I am also grateful to my entire team at Success

Monks for all their efforts. A special thanks to Ms. Cheshta Rajora and Ms. Hemani Bhandari, research associates at Success Monks for all their creative inputs on the project. A special mention to our design team—Shrey Gupta from Scotoma Vision and Maninder Singh from Cogitans designs. Special thanks to Mr. Nitin Seth, Country Head-Fidelity India, for his constant encouragement, support and nurturing “ideas.” Thanks to my colleagues and friends at McKinsey & Co for giving me four wonderful years of world-class work experience. For without you office would not have been what it was. Big thanks to all of you.

I am thankful to the faculty members at SSCBS—Dr. Poonam Verma, Ms. Sonia Sareen, Ms. Damini Gupta, Mr. K Bijoy, Mrs. Kishoree Shankar, Mrs. Anuja Mathur. The members of National Entrepreneur Network—Kalpana Sinha, Sanjay Kapoor, Vasanti Venugopal, Raj Bhat, Laura Parkins, Chippi Pillai, Smija. Also a big thanks to the faculty members at various institutes for helping us spread the message of Entrepreneurship—Dr. Dinesh Khanduja, Mrs. Swarna Bakshi, Dr. Alok Saklani, Dr. Anita Lal, Ms. Seep Sethi, Ms. Mrinalini Shah, Mr. Maroof Ahmed, Dr. J. P. Dudeja, Dr. Neelam Saxena, Ms. Ruchika Sharma, Mrs. Sukhmani Bhardwaj, Mrs. Priya Sharma, Mr. Abhayjeet Singh, Ms. Latika Dhuria, Mr. Vineet Jain, Mrs. Kirti Mankotia, Mrs. Abhilasha Upadhaya, Mrs. Sivambiga Vijay, Mr. Ankur Buddhiraja. A special thanks to Mr. Riyaz Khan, Dr. Anuraag, Surabhi, Vasu, Anusha, and Toastmasters community. I am also thankful to the students of SSCBS, DU, and Fore School of Management for their faith in me.

I am sure a few deserving names might have gone unmentioned. Hence, in case I forgot to mention any names, please forgive the error. Thanks for all the kindness and love.

The Resignation

Dear ...,

It is with mixed feelings that I submit this letter of resignation from the Firm as on 4th January

Working for this esteemed organization has been a wonderful experience. I could not have asked for a better group of colleagues to work with and learn from.

I would like you to be assured that I will do all I can to make the transition smooth.

I wish you and the company continued success in all your endeavours and thank you for having had me as a part of the team.

Best Regards,
Siddhartha Sharma
4 January (7:44 p.m.)

Introduction: Why I Quit My Job

When I was five years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down “happy.” They told me I didn’t understand the assignment, and I told them they didn’t understand life.

—JOHN LENNON

A Copassenger

I remember the evening. It was 8:30 p.m. on the first Sunday of the month of January. I had just boarded my flight back to New Delhi from the Mumbai airport.

Keeping the bag in the overhead cabin, I settled in my seat with my iPod and my favourite book—*The Alchemist*—a fable about following one’s dreams. The lady at the boarding-pass counter had been kind enough to allot the requested window seat. The boarding was about to be closed in a couple of minutes. It gave me immense relief to know that the two seats next to mine were empty, for an overtalkative copassenger was the last thing I wanted that day.

Just seconds before the doors of the plane were to be shut, an old man entered the cabin accompanied by one of the flight attendants. She held his bag in one hand, since he appeared too frail to lift his own baggage. He appeared to be in his late 80s with a wrinkled face, sagging skin, and tired eyes with thick glasses.

He was dressed up in casual, loosely fitted trousers, a full-sleeved shirt, and a sleeveless sweater.

“That’s your seat, Sir,” she said pointing towards one of the vacant seats in the same row as mine. “If you need any assistance please press this button,” she said pointing towards the calling bell and placing his briefcase in the cabin overhead. The plane was about 70 per cent occupied and I was happy that at least the seat just next to mine was still vacant. The old man passed a faint smile to the lady and then with the same smile still on his face, he looked at me and gradually settled in the aisle seat. I returned the smile with equal, if not less, intensity.

The captain ordered the doors shut and the plane was ready for take-off. I placed my book and iPod on the vacant seat between me and the elderly man. The plane finally took off and I immediately found myself gazing outside the window. I guess the age difference between me and the elderly gentleman was too big to motivate either one of us to strike a conversation.

I must admit that the window seats during a night flight are one of the best places to contemplate about your life. After having spent an hour in the air and lost in my introspection, a frail voice broke the silence, “So young man, are you following your dreams?” I looked back in the direction of the voice. It was the old man holding a familiar book in his hand and looking at me with a poker face.

I looked down at the seat where I had kept the iPod and the book only to realize that the book was not there. I was taken aback and also confused, whether to answer the unsolicited question first or to express my concern over the audacity of a stranger to pick up my book. Guess he sensed my annoyance and extended his hand forward accompanied by his peculiar smile and said, “Son, I am your copassenger for today’s flight, pleased to meet you.” The manner in which this octogenarian introduced himself to me managed to bring a smile on my face for I was amazed to observe his subtle humour which his peculiar smile complemented. I worked

in a company that promoted “first name culture” but could not really practise it with an elderly gentleman who was probably my grandfather’s age; besides he never told me his real name. “Pleased to meet you too Sir, I am Siddhartha,” I said shaking hands with him. I prayed silently in my heart that the conversation would end there, and looked out of the window towards the dark skies, making an attempt to return to my introspection mode.

“You did not answer my question. Are you following your dreams?” I wanted to snatch my book from his clutch and sink into my “thinking mode” again. Besides how “sarcastic” can one get in asking questions to a person one is barely acquainted with. It had been not more than an hour and an exchange of a few words since he knew me, but he had the audacity to pick up a stranger’s belonging without permission and to make the matter worse, throw a personal question at my face, which I comprehended was motivated on reading the title of my book.

Realizing that I was helpless for the next one hour, I replied, “Oh Sir, it is just a book.” I could have told him that I had read the book more than 20 times and it was more than “just a book” to me, but I intentionally kept quiet. I was leveraging the strategy I always used with my overtalkative, overfriendly, overpreachy copassengers—to speak only when asked something and to answer their questions in one sentence.

This time I was up against a master communicator who always ended his conversation with a question, “One day you will realize it was not ‘just a book’. I am 87 years old. How old are you and do you stay in Mumbai?”

I told him that I was 25 years old and that I had come to Mumbai to meet a friend. By now he had already got my attention with his remark “One day, you will realize it was not ‘just a book’.” It is true that every time I read the book, I always learned something that I had missed or overlooked the previous time, but it is a scary thought to imagine holding the same book some 60 years later,

and realizing you could never decipher it completely. Even Paulo Coelho did not take so long to write the masterpiece.

“Even I came to meet my friend in Mumbai. I stay in Varanasi and have a connecting flight from New Delhi. I have been observing you for the past one hour. Are you alright, son? Something seems to trouble you.”

I was convinced by now that he belonged to the ilk of “over-preachy aged characters,” who never miss an opportunity to share their philosophies with you. I had been reading psychology works for more than 10 years as a matter of hobby and could identify all the communication styles and presupposition frameworks. Despite my initial communication strategy failure, I was ready to take the challenge head-on and use the tool of counterquestioning.

“Everything is fine, Sir. How is your friend? I am sure you had a great time meeting him,” I said in an effort to counterquestion.

“Tell the truth to yourself son, it will help you.” This sounded like a slap on the face and before I could reply he continued, “I could not meet my friend but I am sure he must be fine now. He was bedridden for three months and died last week.” Again I was pushed into the ocean of perplexity for I didn’t know what reaction to display, either to get back to him for accusing me of lying or to console him for the death of his friend. “I am sorry to hear that” were the only words that came out of my mouth.

“Do not be sorry, when you are as old as I am, you will not be able to meet all your friends. Some of them will go without even informing you. My wife passed away in sleep five years back at the age of 80. Even I am not sure who will manage to meet me before I go. When you are 87, time is certainly not your friend. But the worst enemy is uncertainty; you do not know when your life will be snatched away from you. I do not know how much time I have—one year, two years, or five years. Can I ask you a few questions? I think I can help you.”

Could I have said “No”? I do not think so for I was reeling under the weight of future visions he shared during the last two

minutes. “Yes Sir, you sure can,” were the only words that I could utter. I was sure that the elderly gentleman was in a state of grief and the pain he had endured during the past few years of his life had made him all the more blunt and frank in his approach. “He thinks he can help me?” I said to myself, wondering “What help do I exactly need?” I concluded that the old man probably needed an ear to vent out his feeling of loss.

I decided to stick to my approach—to be as succinct as possible.

“Is everyone you care about happy?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“It means your problem is related to you. Human beings are unhappy only when the people they care about are facing problems or when they themselves are facing problems.”

“Isn’t it obvious?” I said, wondering why the gentleman thought I had a problem in the first place.

“It is very obvious but when we are young we do not communicate clearly with ourselves, especially when it comes to defining our own problems. We are too busy solving problems of others around us.”

“True,” I nodded in approbation.

“Do you have any health problems?”

“No. By the way are you a psychiatrist?” The mysterious question finally slipped from my mouth.

“No, I am a retired banker. I worked in a nationalized bank for about 40 years.”

Wow. By now I had started to enjoy the rapid-fire round of being probed on my “happiness quotient” by an ex-banker of a nationalized bank.

“Studying or working?”

“I work.”

“Do you love your profession? Is that something you always wanted to be?”

A pause followed, because for some inexplicable reason I couldn’t answer the question.

“If you have to think so much, you do not love your job.”

“I like my job and I work in the strategic research department of one of the world’s best organizations.”

“Son, it does not matter whether your company is the best in the world or not—what matters is whether it is the best profession for *you*. And only you can decide what profession is best for you. That is when you truly fulfil your purpose.”

“Did you love banking? You spent 40 years as a banker.”

Pause. It was my turn to grill my copassenger.

“Son, I liked banking but I always wanted to be a teacher. I passed my 12th-standard exam and joined the bank as a clerk. I realized it very late in life when I was close to retirement. I do not know why. Maybe I was afraid to share it with anyone, just like you are very reluctant to share it with me and more importantly yourself.”

“So are you teaching anywhere these days?” Though I immediately felt embarrassed asking this to an octogenarian, a person who retired from his job even before I was born.

“Yes son, though I could not make a profession out of it. I never miss an opportunity to share whatever learning I come across. *When you are my age* one thing that you will give up for sure is the fear of rejection. Ever since I gave up my fear, I do not mind talking to strangers. Though only one in 100 people talk to me for as long as you did. Guess your window seat did not give you any choice. Did it?”

I was totally floored by the emotional intellect of the octogenarian gentleman, and my silent admiration for him was momentarily disturbed by the words of the flight attendant.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we will be landing at New Delhi airport in about five minutes from now. We request you to pull your seats upright and fasten your seat belts. Local time is 11:00 p.m. and the temperature is 7°C. Please remain seated till the airplane comes to a complete halt. Thank You.”

“Do you have any regrets in life?” I asked after regaining my consciousness, which was lost in the depth of his words.

“Just one, not fulfilling my purpose to the extent I could have. What I have been doing in a very small manner for 27 years, I could have done it for all the 67 years I worked,” his words were like vessels overflowing with a feeling of repentance.

He continued, “*When you are old*, you will realize that the two most fatal mistakes that anyone can make are—not realizing early what their purpose is or where their passion lies, and not to develop the skills necessary to bring that purpose to fruition. *Purpose is not something you look at with regretful eyes of old age, but something that should be looked with the sanguine eyes of a child and fulfilled with Godly perseverance.* While I was busy loving and pleasing others, I realized I missed loving the most important person I knew: myself.”

The plane touched the ground with a thud. There were a few more announcements by the crew, but somehow I could not hear anything for about a couple of minutes, after listening to what I had just heard. It was as if his magical words had enchanted me. The plane came to a halt and the gates of the aircraft were opened.

But I struggled to gain my sense back. I stood up and grabbed my belongings to follow the queue.

“You are not getting down?” I asked him.

“I told you that I have a connecting flight. Besides, I have to wait for the attendant to come. When you are old you need others more than you ever imagined during the younger days. But I am not complaining. The attendants out here are very pretty,” he said with his signature, peculiar smile.

I was smudged in a trance that I struggled to say anything. “It was a pleasure to meet you Sir,” was all I could say.

“Thank you so much, for the kind words.” He continued, “Son, I just attended a funeral of one of my best friends and I want to tell you something. Listen to it and try to remember it forever. This might change your life forever.

“If and only if you could hear what people will say at the time of your death, you will *stop* doing a lot of things that you do now ‘thinking about what others will think’. And then *you will start living your destiny, doing what you were sent here for*.

“Goodbye, and here is my card.” Since my hands were full with my baggage and accessories, he placed it in the upper pocket of my shirt.

I disembarked and it took me about 20 minutes to exit the airport. Once I sat in the taxi, the solitude made me ponder over the eye-opening conversation I had. Those words of the elderly gentleman forced me to think and question my love for my profession. I did not know when I would follow my dreams or if at all I would follow them. But I really wanted to thank him again for the invaluable advice.

I put my hand in my shirt pocket to have a look at the gentleman’s card and details, with a hope to contact him as soon as possible. But to my amazement, the card did not contain any such information. What I found instead was a handwritten message:

“Hope You Live Your Dreams.”

A Copassenger (You can call me Melchizedek, if you want a name.)

A smile came across my face, this time as a salute to his quick-wittedness in naming himself after one of the characters from my favourite book—*The Alchemist*—a fable about following your dreams.

The Three Questions “We All Will Ask Ourselves When We Die”

I reached home at half-past midnight and went straight to bed because I had to go to office the next day. I tried to sleep but I could not, as if I was haunted by the words of my copassenger.

“Am I living my dreams? Am I following my passion?” were the questions that were bombarding the walls of my head. After four

years of experience in the corporate world, the words “passion” and “dreams” sounded like Greek to me. Why did I stumble and hesitate to reply when he asked me if I loved my profession?

Pause for a moment and ask yourself. What do the words “passion” and “dream” mean to you?

Things were different when I was in school or college. I dreamed that in my life, my thoughts and actions will affect millions of lives, but after having worked for four years, I felt grieved and disheartened to know that hardly two hundred people on this planet were aware of my existence.

I could not help but think about the past years of my life. My mind stretched its arms and grabbed as many past memories as it could, and all I was left with, was the same repentance that I sensed in the voice of that elderly gentleman. We all know that little voice inside us that tells us to follow our heart, to live our potential and yet we ignore it all the time in pursuit of things we really do not need, and impressing people who really do not matter to us. The inner voice had never been so loud before.

The Three Questions

It is funny to know that we live in an age of instant communication, where it takes only a fraction of a second to connect to someone thousands of miles away—through cell phones, emails, instant messages, and yet sometimes it takes years or maybe a lifetime to connect with ourselves and to send a simple message to our own brain located between our two ears.

The learning I received during the one-hour conversation with the 87-year-old copassenger, at an altitude of 35,000 ft, was way more valuable than anything that I had learned during the past 25 years, at any institute or from any individual on ground. It forced me to think; and everything starts with thinking. I realized that when our journey of life would come to an end, we all would ask ourselves the same three inevitable and unavoidable questions.

Our answers to these three questions will determine if we exit this mortal world with a blissful feeling of “a life well-lived” or with regretful thoughts of “an unfulfilled life.”

One day your life will flash before your eyes. Make sure it's worth watching.

—Gerard Way

Question 1: Did I Dare to Dream?

The first question you will ask yourself in your mind is “Did I dare to dream?” Most of us, being the victims of mass social conditioning, fail to even dream about what is important to us, thus missing the forest for the trees. We become specialists of trivial things and fail to unleash the most powerful force we humans have been blessed with: imagination. The absence of a dream is the reason behind the soulless existence many people live. Did I dream of becoming myself, doing certain activities and owning some things? Did I have a list of clearly defined dreams that positively charged me up mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and financially?

Did I even dream of becoming what I could have and what I wanted to—a musician, a singer, a dancer, a teacher, a photographer, an architect, an actor, a painter, an expert fitness trainer, a dietician, a nutrition specialist, a software engineer, a consultant, a fashion designer, an interior decorator, an entrepreneur, an art director, a business person, an accomplished doctor or surgeon, inspirational speaker, radio jockey, basketball player, chess champion, cricketer, footballer, sports expert or correspondent, a jet or commercial pilot, a stand-up comedian, a community leader, or a philanthropist? Did I even try to become what I could have? Did I try to know myself—my skills, my hobbies, my talents, my passion? Did I ever have the courage to sink deep into the ocean of my abilities to delve for that one hidden talent I must have been blessed with?

Did I even dream of doing the activities that bring a smile on my face and make me feel that I am alive, skills that I want to master in my lifetime, things that I would like to learn; or getting that perfect body, speaking certain languages, travelling the world and visiting the most exotic places, bungee jumping, free falling, skydiving, scuba diving, surfing the biggest waves, racing camels between the Pyramids, learning meditation or martial arts, learning that musical instrument, reading the best books ever written, attending an Oscar or a film premiere at Cannes? What are the activities that make me feel vibrant, vital, and alive about my existence? What are the activities that inject colour into the insipid painting of my life?

Did I even dream to have or own that perfect home next to the beach, a cottage at the bottom of the valley, a mansion with a swimming pool, my dream car, a private jet or yacht, personal art gallery, a soccer team, a music or photography studio, a personal gym, a private theatre, owning a library with the best books ever written? Did I dream of enjoying all the things money can buy, and tasting and experiencing the finest luxuries available in this world? Did I dream of making a major contribution—building schools, old-age homes, hospitals—through the wealth and riches I accumulated?

Did I consider myself worthy enough of dreaming these dreams?
Did I dare to Dream?

You've got to have a dream. If you don't have a dream, how you going to have a dream come true?

—Oscar Hammerstein

Question 2: Did I Live My Dream?

Many dream, but only a handful do something about them and live them during their lifetime.

Some people do dream big in life but unfortunately let laziness, inaction, fear, failure, or peer pressure stop them from living those dreams.

Did I do everything to live my dream? Did I give up early on my dreams? Did I learn everything that was needed to fulfil my dream? Did I give it my best shot? Did I let my friends and family members stop me from pursuing my passion? Did I believe the wrong story or the lessons taught to me? Did I take adequate action in the pursuit of my goals? Did I waste too much time on minor things? Did I focus on urgent things more than the important ones?

Did I believe in myself? Did I let the fear of unknown stop me? Did I let the fear of failure take the steam out of my attempts? Did I think too small and keep a very narrow outlook? Did I let people crush my dream? Did I let them kill my ideas? Did I acquire all the education pertaining to my field? Did I keep the right company? Did I read all the books I possibly could to help me in my dreams?

Did I succumb to mass conditioning? Did I live like a lion or did I live like a sheep? Did I have the courage to express my dreams openly and follow them? Did I have the courage to go left when the crowd went right? Did I develop the right discipline? Did I spend too much time in my comfort zone? Did I believe that God resides in me? Did I take complete responsibility for my success and failures?

Did I blame others for my limitations and failures? Did I let excuses stop me?

Did I put in all the necessary hard work? Did I stop myself?
Was I fooled by the easy road? Did I wait for the right time?
Did I wait for the right opportunity? Did I refuse to change?
Did I let my dream die, before I did?
Did I live my dream?

The worst nightmare is the dream you never lived and shared.
The worst loss is the money you never made. The biggest miss is the goal you never aimed for. The biggest failure is the success you never tried for.

Question 3: Did I Share My Dream?

Invest your life in the lives of others. Happiness comes as a by-product of providing a useful service. Success and happiness would always elude you if you do not find a way to serve others with your passion.

Did my dream make any positive difference in the lives of my fellow human beings? Did I ever think beyond myself and my family? Did my dream make a few people smile? Did my dream touch a few lives? Will people remember me as a kind, humble person?

Did I create wealth for people around me? Did I assist any social entrepreneurship initiative? Did I create jobs for the society? Did my dream create leaders? Did I share a life-changing idea with fellow human beings? Did I help people in realizing their true potential?

Did I share my key learning with as many people as I could? Did I share success strategies of my profession with others through a talk, an article, or a book?

Did I get so much obsessed by my own dream that it became a nightmare for people around me? Did my business serve enough people? Did the stakeholders of my dream get fair returns for their efforts? Did I use my wealth and influence for helping the less fortunate?

Did I help people to develop a positive attitude in life? Did I bring people out of depression and pain? Did I matter to the world?

Did I start a school for the underprivileged? Did I teach at a school? Did I raise funds for a hospital for the needy? Did I give my time or money to charitable causes? Did I do any community service? Did I devour the satisfaction of doing things that money cannot buy—hugging the destitute or holding an orphan's finger?

Did one life breathe easy because I lived? Did I make any significant contribution towards humanity? Did I leave the earth better than I found it? Did I give back what I took from society?

Did I make a significant contribution?

Did I share my dream?

Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity.

—Horace Mann

A Choice to Make

The time had come to make a choice—a choice to continue doing what I had been doing or to live my life in such a way that I find an answer to all the three questions life slams at our face when we are about to die.

Did I dare to dream?

Did I live my dream?

Did I share my dream?

I had a choice to make—to search the answers to these three questions, or to go to work the next day and follow the monotonous, robotic path pursued by the masses.

Guess what? I went to work the next day.

The story did not end there. In fact, it just started. Because I went to work and resigned from my job.

And I am glad that I did.

Part One

Did I Dare to Dream?

1

Back to School

Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

If You Do Not Go to School, You Will Never Become What You Want to Become

My earliest memories of childhood include being woken up by my mother six days a week—Monday to Saturday. No matter how much I wanted to sleep, she would always force me out of bed using a variety of expressions that depicted a myriad of emotions—love, care, anger, and urgency. I guess this continued for about 15 years during the first 18 years of my life, 250 days a year, till the time I was out of school and joined college. Parents would agree with me that it takes a lot of effort to prepare their kids for school every day. The effort was slightly higher especially in this case because my school was an all-boys catholic school. No matter how many excuses or arguments I gave, my mother always came up with something smarter. There was one sentence which I particularly remember that I must have heard about a thousand times, for which I had no counteranswer: “Sid, if you do not go to

school, you will never become what you want to become and you will never get to do what you want to do.”

And the only answer I would have—to this often-repeated, loaded-with-concern advice—was “Okay Mom.” I still have the faint memory of purchasing cursive writing books, memorizing basic multiplication tables, the first time I used a computer at the age of 10 at school, and many other new things that I learned at school. I must admit that the first six to seven years in the school were very informative. I learned how to read, write, and communicate in English and Hindi, and also in Sanskrit for a couple of years.

But They Never Asked Me What I Wanted to Become

By the time I was 14 years old, I had heard almost 1,500 times from my mother that school would help me in becoming what I wanted to become. I had started to believe her. But there was a problem—a big problem. *The school never asked me what I wanted to become.* It appeared that there was no scope for creativity or imagination in the world run by the timetable given to us at the beginning of every session.

The first time the education system asked me something was when I cleared the 10th standard, and I was asked to choose between Commerce stream and Science stream for my further stay with them. The next time the education system asked me any question was after finishing my board exams—I was required to choose the course and college where I would be spending the next three years of my life. But even in this case the decision was not mine alone, since it majorly depended on the percentage of marks I had scored in my 12th-standard exam.

Even during the three years at the college, the education system never asked me what I wanted to become, and just like school, at the end I was indirectly asked to make a choice between getting a job or going for higher studies.

And I Understood What She Meant

I must admit that for a while I was confused that how could an education system help me in becoming what I wanted to become without even knowing what I wanted to become.

I was very lucky to have spent 15 years of my life at a wonderful school and college, but we cannot leave our dreams and passions at the mercy of the curriculum preached at various schools and colleges. I completely agree that it is very hard to make a successful career in most of the fields if you do not know how to read, write, and communicate.

However, *just because you are going to school every day, it does not mean that you will become what you want to become and get to do what you want to do.* Maybe going to school guarantees that you will not fail, but it does not guarantee success in life. Absence of failure does not mean presence of success, just like absence of hatred does not guarantee the presence of love in any relationship. At schools we focus more on preventing failure than nurturing success.

Do not train children to learn by force or harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.

—Plato

The Big Investment or the Biggest Robbery

Let's do some mathematics here.

Right from the age of three, we all have been going to school and the trend continues for most of us till we finish our college education. By the time we finished our graduation, we would have attended a total of 18 years of formal education—3 years of kindergarten, 12 years of school and 3 years of college studies.

Eighteen years of education by the time we are 21 years of age.

If we spent on average six hours at school or college, for about 200 days in a year, it would mean that we spent 21,600 hours

($18 \times 6 \times 200$) in getting our formal education. That is a *big* investment, isn't it?

Mind it, I have just included the time we actually spent at school and college; I have not included the countless hours that we spent studying at home. The number would be significantly higher if we include the time spent on studies outside school or college, and if we take postgraduate studies into consideration.

The Big Question

After your investing 21,600 hours in acquiring formal education, let me ask you two simple yet very important questions:

1. *Are you in a job or a business that you always wanted to be in?*

If the answer to the question is a resounding “Yes,” I would happily advise you to put this book down and carry on with the wonderful life you are living. Statistics tell us that only a very minute percentage of people truly enjoy their work. Most of us go to work so that we can earn money to spend on the things and activities that give us happiness.

I do not know what that means for you, but if even after dedicating 21,600 hours to an education system we find ourselves ill-equipped, rather unequipped, to be in a profession of our choice, there is some change that is needed in the way we educate ourselves.

Walk into any classroom of this country and you will find books on numerous subjects like physics, geography, financial management, or biotechnology. But where do we find information on the most critical subjects of life—“To Live a Life of Your Dreams” or “How to Make a Profession Out of Your Passion?”

2. *Out of the things you learned in your formal education of 21,600 hours, write down 10 things that you use on a day-to-day basis,*

except your ability to read, write, talk, and do basic mathematical calculations?

Forget about reaching 10, most of us will not be able to go beyond a couple of things. All the skills that we use in our work on a day-to-day basis were learnt during the initial training days at the workplace. I think there are many unimportant subjects that are taught at school and college at the cost of a few very crucial life subjects.

The irony is that during our formal education we spent more time reading about the *Quit India Movement* than a *Quit What You Hate Movement*. The irony is that we have spent more time in physics class to learn how an electric motor works than how our mind works. The irony is that you have written more about the famous political leaders of the world than about the most important person on this earth for you (you). We studied more about what means a lot to the external world but never bothered to learn what matters to our “inner world.” We remember the words Mahatma Gandhi used to motivate the entire nation, but we do not know what words motivate us to lead a life full of passion and fulfilment.

You Can Unlock Your Potential

As mentioned, I am not denying the importance of the 21,600 hours, but what I am trying to share is that if a certain percentage of those 21,600 hours were spent on helping us understand our behaviour, thoughts, goals, talents, communication patterns, and personality traits, then we would have felt much more empowered to face the challenges of our personal and professional lives.

The Big Shuffle That Is Needed

By the way, are there people on this earth who are making money by doing what you would like to?

Yes! In fact there are thousands of people who are doing what you would like to take up as a profession, but somehow you feel that you will not be able to make a career in the same field.

The reasons could be many:

“I do not have what it takes.”

“They are the chosen ones.”

“It is too late now.”

“What if things do not work out?”

Whatever may be your reason, you have to admit that it is keeping you away from living a fulfilling life.

Hence to live a much more fulfilling life, we need a basic level of education but more than that we need an intelligent system that equips us with the skills and knowledge necessary to choose our profession. *We do not really need to invent a profession or start a community of people to do what we enjoy doing; we just need to find the community and then join it.* It is very simple. It might not be very easy but I can tell you from my experience and countless testimonials that it is very much possible. Hence all that is needed is a strategy that helps you in making this shift from a community where you find yourself stuck to a community where you feel your passion lies. *This book is all about sharing that success strategy, and it will help you in making the most important transition of your work-life.*

Education System: The Need for Reforms

Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.

—Albert Einstein

Education is very important and I feel it is always better to have it than not to have it. However, the only point that I want to lay stress on is the fact that your education alone will not guarantee you economic success and happiness. One needs to proactively figure out a blueprint for the attainment of one's objectives.

The Real Purpose of Education

I believe that the purpose of education can be summarized as follows: to empower human beings to accomplish their objectives. Education is a tool; it is a leverage that we use to reach our objectives, faster than we could have done in its absence. To simplify it even further, I believe that the purpose of education is to help you do things that fulfil you. I also feel that education is a dynamic process. What was true or considered the best option available 25, 15, 10, or 5 years back may not be the best approach in today's fast-changing world. Hence we should all ponder upon the approach we use and the paths we choose to reach our objectives. We should all question and judge them once a while to see if there are better choices available. The education system should evolve constantly to cater to the growing aspirations of the people. The real problem starts when the education system starts limiting human aspirations instead of assisting them and bringing them to fruition.

It is my personal belief that the purpose of education should be to make human beings happy by empowering them with all the information that is needed to be happy. I think the basic things that a human needs to be happy are wealth, health and relationships, and when all three of them are growing and getting better with time. The art of being wealthy, healthy, and developing excellent relationships is not taught in schools. Schools focus on scholastic and professional skills, but not on wealth, health, and relationship skills. These crucial skills are left as default subjects to be learned as one progresses through life. *This explains why smart professionals—engineers, bankers, business analysts, doctors, and accountants—who earned excellent grades in school may still struggle financially, have poor health, and meaningless relationships.*

Educate Yourself to Happiness

If you ask the students why they study, a majority of them would reply that they study so that they can get good grades. If you prod

them and ask why they need good grades, they will tell you that it will help them in *getting a job*. If you further question them why they need a job, they will answer, “To earn money.” Take this to a deeper level, and they will say that money gives them freedom to do and have the things they want, which in turn makes them happy. Hence everything boils down to happiness not only on a philosophical level but also through logical thinking.

Please note that there is nothing wrong in getting a good job. But I want each one of us to shift our focus from “getting a job” to “getting into a profession we want.” This is a unique position in life and we all should aspire for it, if we like to be happy and it even entails the same outcome—making money. I truly believe that we should never underestimate the role of interests in our career plan. The more closely our day-to-day work matches our hobbies, interests, or passions, the more likely it is that we will be happy doing it.

Hence we should not educate ourselves just to get a job; rather we should concentrate on the kind of profession we want to get into, and then get all the education related to it.

In today’s world, endless possibilities exist for us to work in a profession of our choice. Still we have been conditioned to stay in the jobs that we so naively chose after our studies. This book will assist you in deciding and getting into the profession you belong to and where your passion lies. Remember true success is to choose a profession that makes you feel fulfilled, and not one in which you simply “get by.”

A lot of us are overeducated to do the jobs we presently do, and undereducated and ill-informed about the jobs we would like to do.

We Are Facing a Student Burnout

Over the past few years we have all seen a new kind of burnout emerging—student burnout. Students who have been working

hard for the board exam and the entrance exams of reputed institutes are now forced to accept the harsh reality that there are not enough seats available at quality institutes, even for the smart students. Only an absurdly low percentage of smart students manage to get into these institutes, leaving a lot of academically smart students with only one of the two choices—to leave the country for further studies or to settle for a “not-so-good” institute.

Imagine if 100 per cent is what you need to get into one of the top commerce colleges of this country, we are directly giving a message to the students who scored above 90 per cent that they are not good enough. If they have the resources available with them they will pursue their further studies from a place which will do justice to their calibre. And if they do not have the resources, they will be compelled to settle for the next-best institute available to them. For most of the people this might come across as the right thing to do but for me this is one of the biggest mistakes our education system makes. I see two possible disadvantages associated with this obvious approach—first, because of resource constraint, the best facilities are channelized only towards the *super achievers* (read students with 95–100 per cent marks) and due to this, we are not able to provide the best possible environment to the *high achievers* (read students with 80–95 per cent marks). This very factor could actually stop these high achievers from becoming potential super achievers. Second, instead of rewarding these high achievers and providing them a support system to nurture their talent even more, we are penalizing them for not being super achievers.

Survival of the Fittest: If Everyone Thinks about Survival, Who Will Think about Growth?

I do not completely agree with the proponents of Darwin’s theory, especially when they try to draw an analogy that it is the “survival of the fittest” in the education system. A lot of high achievers could have not only survived but also grown along with the super

achievers if they had been provided with an opportunity to do so. The theory might be applicable to species other than Homo sapiens but I believe that we are something more than animals. The theory might be relevant for the habitants of deep forests and jungles but not for the ones who live in the corridors of our education system. The theory is applicable to the impact on the lives caused by the natural evolution changes that take place, not to human-made environmental changes. If I am not wrong, tigers are one of the strongest and the fittest species of our animal kingdom, but why is it that they are struggling for survival every day? It is because they are fit enough to survive evolutionary changes but they are not strong enough to survive human-induced disasters. Our education system that we have been blindly following over the past 50–60 years has turned into a breeding ground of mediocrity where the best facilities are accessible to only a few super achievers, rather than a playground of excellence and creativity for all its beneficiaries.

Also, if the education system is all about survival, who would be taking care of growing the aptitude and the overall betterment of the children who are part of the system? How are we helping the average students to become high achievers, and the high achievers to become super achievers?

The Education System: A Bubble or a Black Hole?

Over the past few years, a lot has been vehemently spoken about the shortcomings of the education system but not much has been concretely accomplished in the direction. Many of these critics even perceive it as a bubble on the verge of bursting, but I think that the education system is not like a bubble about to burst—it has become one of the black holes that have the potential to absorb all the criticism and continue like this for eternity. Besides, if you go as per the system and keep on accumulating degrees, you will at least get a secure job in the end, even if the knowledge learned

in the process of acquiring degrees is used or not. If your biggest aspiration is to have a safe, secure profession then you can continue accumulating the degrees that serve as a “gate-pass” for it, but if your goal is to be a massive success in the profession you love then you would need something more than a mere gate-pass. We do not get into the profession we love with the objective of mere survival; we get into it with the sole mission of reaching the greatest heights possible while enjoying the journey.

However, if the rat race which has its genesis in the competitive education system and ends in the frustrated corporate world does not make any sense to you, you are holding the right book.

Get Out of the Spin and Soar

Also, it would be unfair to expect things to change overnight especially when the system has been in place for as much as 70–80 years. What best we can do is to develop a paradigm that being educated in today’s times means something more than holding an academic degree. The degree might give your profession a launch, but the speed and the altitude at which your career is going to fly thereafter is determined by your own commitment to learn the success principles and the laws associated with your profession. These growth principles or laws were not taught to us during the years of our formal education.

These principles when applied will not only help you in entering the profession of your choice but will keep you soaring high in your dream profession.

Good News

Your self-education is anytime more powerful and important than any public education system. Your personal learning and experience can overwrite any amount of harmful social conditioning that you underwent intentionally or unintentionally. I found these

principles very useful to make a successful transition from a job to a profession of my dreams.

Even if you do not have the best formal education or grades, you can learn and apply these universal principles and succeed in the area of your own choice and interest. If you study successful people and do what they did, you will be successful; and if you study failures and do not do what they did, you will not be a failure.

No matter what your circumstances are, you can always take the first steps towards the dream journey called “Passion into Profession” so that you can....

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- Your self-education system is anytime more powerful and important than any public education system.
- Never educate yourselves just to get a job. Rather decide about the job you would like to do and then get all the education related to it.
- A lot of us are overeducated to do the jobs we presently do, and undereducated and ill-informed about the jobs we would like to do.

Self-Awareness

- Calculate the number of hours of formal education you undergo or underwent.
- Write down 10 things you learned during your education that you use in your day-to-day work, except your abilities to read, write, speak, and do basic calculations.
- What are the subjects you wish were taught to you during the school and college years?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

2

Avoid the “Herd” Mentality: Wrong Wall and the Crowded Ladder

The tragedy is not that human beings waste their potential, though that is a big tragedy. The biggest tragedy is that it bothers them the least.

—ANONYMOUS

Busy “Making a Living” or “Designing a Life”

The “Promising” Days

“Dad, who is a prodigy?” he asked his dad on their way back home from the school.

“Your son is a child prodigy. He is so good in everything he does, be it academics or extracurricular,” that is what his 10th standard teacher told his dad at an open-house event, after he had topped the board exam in school. On hearing this comment, his father’s chest had inflated by a couple of inches in the presence of the parents of other children in the class.

He was a promising child; everybody told him so throughout his school days. Always among the top five of his class, he was also very active in a host of extracurricular activities—soccer, painting, dancing, guitar, debating, and photography. He also loved reading

and used to read one book every week. At 16 years of age he was also fitness-conscious and used to jog and do freehand exercises for one hour every day, taking an off only during the school exams.

“Son, a prodigy is someone who, at an early age, masters one or more skills far beyond his or her level of maturity. You should be happy because you are one,” his dad replied as they drove back home, in their old family car.

He was indeed very happy.

The “Fun” Days

As he moved on to college, it was time to get serious about career choices. He still maintained good grades, though now he could only take time off for painting, guitar, debating, and photography, and gave up soccer and dancing. The reading habit also suffered a bit due to his hectic schedule; now he read only one book per month. But it was acceptable for one cannot continue with hobbies for a long time. And also things were not that bad for he managed to go to the health club four to five days a week.

He worked harder through the college years and ultimately got placed with one of the best companies that came to his campus. Out of three hundred students, he was among the top five students who got recruited.

The “Learning” Days

With a heart full of dreams and a head full of ambitions he began his corporate journey—five days a week, 10 hours of work every day, and a daily commute of two hours. He loved meeting new people and learning new things at work. It was not a conscious decision but he was not able to allocate time to guitar and painting, two things that he enjoyed a lot. There were no opportunities to indulge in debating at the workplace, though he did try to make up for it by compèring a couple of company get-together parties.

Photography also took a back seat but he did carry his camera to the office “off-site” and annual parties. And the reading habit was now restricted to browsing through various research reports, business journals, and analyst and annual reports for clients. It had been five months since he picked up any book, and had read only three books during the past year. He also started seeing someone he met at his office party. She was working in a different team and had joined just a couple of months back from another organization.

But the good part was that he liked his work and he was a promising guy within the organization as well. The “Fridays for friends, Saturdays for love, and Sundays for the family” approach worked well for him during the first few years. He got two promotions within the organization in a short span of four years and also a couple of international assignments.

The “Racing” Days

His parents and family members were very happy, even though he had started to “miss” something in his life—something he could not explain to others. And this sense of void magnified whenever he saw an old sketch made by him, or passed a health club or bookstore on his way to office, or saw someone carrying a guitar on the back.

It was his fifth year in the company and he could see the corporate funnel getting narrow. He could see that his colleagues who joined the organization with him were either changing jobs or going for further study. There was another reason why he wanted to leave the organization—things were not going smooth between him and his girlfriend. Despite repeated attempts to save the crumbling relationship, they were unable to make it work, and broke up.

Parties were now confined to Friday outings with office friends. The weekends were generally spent studying for the master’s entrance exam.

The “Education” Days

The previous two promotions had come before time but the third one seemed like a distant milestone. According to the management, the role required somebody with a master’s degree. Moreover, most of his friends from college were also leaving jobs for further studies. Armed with his impressive corporate experience, he too applied to one of the top business schools in the country and expectedly got through it.

At the age of 26, he resigned from his job and invested most of his savings in his further education. He was compelled to take a three-year educational loan because the fees of the b-school were substantially high. After all, quality education comes at a high price. Life at the b-school was equally hectic; after all they were preparing the candidates for the corporate grind.

For the next two years, he diligently studied through the assignments and project work, and graduated from the b-school with a decent academic performance. He even got a placement with one of the top recruiters from the campus, at a salary amount that was almost twice what he had last drawn. He and his family were ecstatic because his hard work had finally paid off very well. There was no way his salary could have doubled in two years. Everybody told him that his decision to pursue master’s was indeed one of the best decisions of his life. He was sent to an international training programme for two months to prepare him for the work culture of the company.

During the MBA course, every alternate day was a party, and life was all about assignments and beers. He even developed a beer belly during those two years of the MBA, but that was not much of a concern for he was confident enough that women outside would overlook it once they saw his fat pay cheque. As you approach the 30s, you get less casual about the way you look. Besides, the belly could be easily hidden behind the business suit.

The MBA degree refurbished his personality. It taught him corporate discipline and the need for being practical at work. He had been out of touch with his passions for too long now, but it did not bother him much. “Once I get settled in my career, I will do everything that I have been missing,” were the words that kept him moving ahead in his career.

The “Racing” Days Start Again

Back from his training, he began his corporate climb; now there was nothing that could stop him from reaching the top. He paid off his education loan in two years instead of the three-year tenure, and found his new work very challenging and satisfactory. After two years and one promotion, his work became more managerial in nature, and his work now involved mentoring new talent on project work. He did miss the deadline pressure and groundwork action sometimes but his boss told him that he had worked for it and now deserved to take it easy. He even wanted to relive his hobbies but he could not take time off for all of them; also, it would have been foolish of him to learn dancing again at 30, especially with the little paunch he had developed over the Friday night beer parties. Guitar and painting did not interest him much. Maybe they were childhood crazes and this was the reason why they felt so alien to him now. After a lot of pondering over the matter he purchased an expensive camera for himself, considering his love of photography. Money was not a problem, and it was high time he pursued some hobby seriously.

Thirty and Married

He was now 30 years old and his family members were pushing him to give marriage a serious thought. Even he realized that all his batchmates were settled or thinking about it; so he too started pursuing matrimonial matters seriously. By then, he had been

seeing someone for a few months and both of them grew fond of each other. He proposed her for marriage and she responded with “I do.”

Just a few days prior to the wedding, he purchased an expensive mid-segment car, since his earlier hatchback was very old and it was high time he upgraded to a car that suited his corporate profile. The car loan was for seven years, but he knew he would pay it earlier than that, just like his educational loan. The first year of the marriage was all about celebrations. He exhausted all his leave that year for the wedding and the honeymoon that followed. His next year was all about working five days a week and then partying on weekends with friends, dinner at relatives’, or attending wedding functions of acquaintances.

He still did not get much time to use his new high-end camera, even though the Bali honeymoon pictures shot with it were really wonderful.

The belly had grown further and the hair had turned grey.

Home, “Sweet” Home

The initial two years of the marriage were very good. Double Income No Kids—they could spend on a lot of things together that one person could not. Money was not a problem. He was 32 and she was 29 years old, and both of them had great jobs. After all, two can live as cheap as one. They also started saving for fulfilling one dream which all married couples nurture—to buy their own “sweet” home. They looked at quite a few properties and ultimately finalized one of the three-bedroom apartment houses in the best part of the city. All their savings were used to make the down payment on the house; the rest was financed by a joint, home loan. The home loan was for a period of 20 years, but as always they were sure about paying it off before the due date. Also, purchasing the house was not enough, and they added new furnishings and chose the best décor for their “sweet” home.

They used to throw regular parties for their friends at their new home. The beer parties were also followed by a few rounds of drinks.

The husband worked hard and during the next two years he repaid his car loan, one year before the actual tenure. The only liability they had on them was the home mortgage of 18 years.

Thirty-five Years: Family Planning

Five years after marriage, it was time to plan a baby. It would not be right to delay it any further since he was 35 and his wife was 32. Moreover, most of their friends had already started their families. Soon the first child arrived and the family was ecstatic with joy. The wife had already quit her job and planned to take care of the baby for the initial three years. Two can live as cheap as one, but three are as expensive as four.

The husband switched his job and found one that gave him a salary jump of about 30 per cent per annum. The living expenses were not a problem, even though it had been three years since their last international vacation. For the first time in his life, the criterion for joining a new place was not challenging work—it was money.

Three years passed quickly, their son joined play school, and the wife too decided to get back to work; she joined her previous company.

He now looked his age or perhaps older, given his ever-increasing pot belly and sudden outburst of white hair that started replacing the grey ones. His college friends, whom he met at one of the alumni reunions, could not recognize him. Well, to their surprise, even he couldn't recognize them. Time spares none.

Running the Race till Midlife

At 38, things were back on track and they started again with their social lives. They were living a comfortable life but both of them

had to work hard for it. They both enjoyed parenthood, taking great care of their son. They also started saving money for securing quality education for him, and also investing in insurance plans to secure his future. At 45, about five years before loan maturity, they paid off the home mortgage.

Finally they could call the home their “own” home. The value of the house had appreciated about 400 per cent during the 15-year period and they were very happy.

The wife was also doing very well. On their 15th anniversary they purchased a new SUV.

At 45, he was one of the senior members of the company he had been working for the past 10 years. He admitted to one of his close friends that now he just works because he cannot afford not to work. Even though he had his own home and cars, he knew that he would have to work for another 10–12 years before he could be financially secure to retire from work.

The Promise

Their son was 10 years old, studying in one of the good schools of the city, and among the few bright students of his class.

The school focused on the overall development of the students—learning one foreign language, painting, dancing, and music were part of the curriculum. At the age of 10, his son was a pro at playing violin. A lot of stress was also laid on physical fitness and sports, and he really enjoyed basketball, soccer, swimming, and cricket.

One afternoon the son missed the school bus. Hence the father decided to pick him up from the school by leaving early from the office. He reached the school and found his son waiting alone in the basketball court, dribbling the ball. He was very happy to see the dedication.

As they started making their way back home, in the new SUV, the son asked, “Dad, who is a prodigy? My class teacher used that word for me but I do not know what it means.”

The question transported him 30 years back in time, to the old family car, to the answer he received on asking the same question to his father. And in response he simply reiterated his father's words: "Son, a prodigy is someone who, at an early age, masters one or more skills far beyond his or her level of maturity."

The only difference was that he did not say these lines with any feeling of pride or accomplishment like his father did.

The son was very happy and he asked the next question, "Wow! Do you know any other prodigy?"

The father's eyes were now moist. He looked out of the window of the moving car and replied, "No Son, you are the only one I know. The only child prodigy I have ever known."

Wrong Wall and the Crowded Ladder

Success is a very subjective term; so is happiness. Some of you after reading this story might think that the protagonist lived a good life, and it could not have been better; some of you would have been able to sense that "something was missing" in his life. Most of us have experienced that "something is missing" feeling in the form of confusion or frustration as to why we continue to do the things we do, even when sometimes we know they are not things we should be doing. Maybe the absence of better alternatives or choices might be the cause behind this "herd" mentality, but I think one reason is that we never cared to explore the options, choices, and alternatives available to us. We do not know that more "rational choices" or "ways of living" exist for us; hence we do not do justice to our unlimited potential.

I feel that the capabilities of human beings range beyond buying materialistic objects like cars and houses. The only problem is that they get entangled in the act of "making a living" that they fail to even think about pursuing the magnificent obsession of "designing their lives." I call it the "wrong wall and the crowded

ladder” syndrome. It appears as if most of us spend our entire lives in climbing the professional ladder; some manage to reach the top, others just hang on. Those who reach the top realize that it was leaning against the “wrong wall,” while those who hang on call it a “crowded ladder” and complain about the lack of opportunities, and blame the system for their slow progress.

There are tools to become aware of the “crowded ladders” and the “wrong walls” that don’t serve your best interest, so that you can make intelligent choices and experience more of what you want and less or none of what you don’t want.

Three Steps to Avoid the “Wrong Wall and the Crowded Ladder” Syndrome

Equal Monthly Instalment Trap

Most people do not follow their passion because they do not get time to think about it or do something about it. They are buried neck deep under the self-created mountain of bills and debt repayments. I often tell people in my seminars that most people’s work-life is a story about three loans and the Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs) associated with them—education loan, car loan, and home loan.

A child studies for 18 years of his life and then joins the corporate world. After working for 3–4 years he realizes that if he wants to climb up the corporate ladder he would need a higher degree. Since the prize of quality education comes with a price, the aspiring student takes up an education loan, which is repaid by working hard after getting the degree. Now once he is done with his studies, it is time to keep up with the society; buying that “luxury car” is now his high priority. Even though he does not have enough money for the same, there are car financing companies to lure him through their alternative financing options, into making the purchase.

I am not in any way negating the value of a master's degree, or the importance of a car, or buying a house. What I am trying to say is that if your decision to pursue masters, buying the car, or house, on a mortgage, keeps you in a profession you do not enjoy, these things will not be worth it. We should all know how to give importance and priority to the main objective. Also, one should know how to keep "first things first." Find your dream career first, get all the education related to it, and then you will enjoy these "worldly" toys to the maximum.

Ask yourself what is more important. Getting a master's degree for a profession you do not enjoy or getting all knowledge related to your dream career? Some of the richest and most successful people in this world do not have a master's degree, yet they are the "masters" when it comes to knowledge about their industry.

Getting that new, sleek, and fast car is important, but do not let it take you away from the road of your true calling. You will be surprised to know that according to research done by Thomas Stanley and William Danko, authors of *The Millionaire Next Door*, the most popular vehicle among American millionaires was the Ford F-150 pickup, and other multi-utility vehicles. It is not that they cannot afford the luxury brands; I think the reason is that they put "first things first." They put their necessity before their luxury. Living in a "dream house" bought on mortgage is not bad, but if it stops you from living your dreams, your dream house will very soon appear a prison to you.

Follow Your Uniqueness

What work you do, rather than what Fortune 500 company you work for, determines your long-term happiness in life. Believe me or not, there is a profession, or some activity in this world that makes you feel unique about your existence. And for the sake of your long-term happiness you cannot afford not to discover that activity or profession, because your happiness will have

permanence attached to it only when you pursue your uniqueness. Think about some of your biggest achievements or let us just take the following two examples:

Cracked the Tough Examination

You prepared with your school peers to get admission into your dream college. You worked hard for months and took all the requisite coaching. When the results were declared you were very happy, because you were the only one in your group who got selected. Remember your level of happiness? How proud you felt about yourself? You shared with great exhilaration, the news of your selection with every next person you met. You felt delighted and unique. Well what happened to the happiness you felt, once you joined college? Within a matter of days, the happiness diminished or dropped significantly. Yes or no? Yes. But do you know why? Because once you joined the college, you were no longer unique; you were surrounded by students who cracked the same exam to get into that reputed college. You could no longer exclaim with joy that you cracked the entrance exam; you lost your uniqueness.

Got Selected by the Best Company for the Job

Similarly, remember getting into the best company by clearing their recruitment process successfully? Your happiness and enthusiasm knew no bounds. Out of 100 applicants you were the lucky one who made it. I have a question: Where did that happiness vanish, where did that enthusiasm vaporize, once you were into the organization, surrounded by hundreds of other colleagues who underwent the same recruitment process successfully? Remember the memories associated with the words, “You are hired”? What happened to those feelings after two months of joining the organization? You celebrated when you nailed that job interview, but

did you celebrate your anniversaries within that job? You even changed the job and got into another so-called best organization, but did that really help in the long run?

The only way to be unique in your own eyes is to identify your passion and then live it every day. Your passion for life will set you free, else it will always be a wrong wall or the crowded ladder for you.

If you want short-term pleasure, get high on drugs or maybe sex; if you want to experience eternal happiness, get high on passion.

Visualize Your Future

It is also very important to see the future from your present point in life. By visualizing, I do not mean imagining the positive outcomes, even though it is a great thing to do. What I do mean is to introspect about where your present set of activities would take you after 5 or 10 years. Would you be closer to your goals or farther away from them? Do you even have any destination in mind for the next decade of your life or are you just drifting from day to day? Long-term happiness is sacrificed for the sake of instant gratification.

If your work-life is a journey, how are you travelling? No captain would advise you to take a ship out in the ocean without having a clear idea about the destination. No pilot would ever take off from the runway without having clarity about the place he wants to reach with the aircraft. Even you do not leave your house without having an idea about the place you intend to go. If your work-life is a game, how are you playing? No basketball team steps into the court without a clear game plan. No soccer team enters the playing ground without a clear strategy. Playing a game without any strategy is good if you plan to play just for fun and with amateurs, but if you really want to play a bigger game, you better plan your career carefully.

If the road that you are walking on will take you to a place called “disappointment” in future, you have the choice to take a better road and reach the desired destination.

We all should get into the observer mode and see where our present actions are taking us personally and professionally, in the long run. Is it the place we intend to be after spending years in a particular career?

You can certainly save yourself from a rude awakening, if you do not sleep for too long.

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- People are so busy “making a living” that they fail to even think about pursuing the magnificent obsession of “designing their lives.”
- Never follow a crowd; there are so many places a crowd cannot go.
- There exists a profession in this world that makes you feel “unique” about yourself.

Self-Awareness

- Do you feel busy because of your work rather than feeling fulfilled?
- What are the things, hobbies, and passions that separate you from most of the people you know?
- What were the things you were very good at during your school and college days?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

3

Retire Young: Passion into Profession

You are growing old, when regret starts taking place of dreams.

—ANONYMOUS

What Is Work?

While flipping through the pages of a dictionary, I came across the definition of the word “work”—“*Activity involving mental or physical effort in order to achieve a purpose or result.*”

The two essential elements that were present in the definition were effort and result. These essential components of work can also be called the stages of work. Any work that is accomplished has two stages: effort stage and result stage.

Effort: Any physical or mental activity (force).

Result: The effort once applied will lead to some result.

Is Work Always a Source of Pain? What’s Your Effort Love Quotient?

Trust me, a person who is excited about work on a daily basis is one of the rarest species. When I analysed the two components carefully, some interesting insights came out, which I believe could very well be the answer to why a majority of the people are disenchanted about their work-life.

The “Time” Spent on “Effort” or “Activity”

We human beings generally spend the majority of our work-time in the effort stage. Think about it—we study for one year and then get the result at the end of the year; we work hard for two years then “get the promotion”; we establish a business for five years, and then achieve break-even and profits. Yes, we do celebrate our results if we are successful but even then the absolute time spent on the “activity” stage is way too high or more than the “result” stage. I am yet to see an employee who worked for two years and then got a promotion and then spent the next two years celebrating that promotion.

Results Affect Effort or Effort Affects Results

It is a known fact that the quality of your results will always be dependent upon the quality of your action or effort, mental or physical. You call it the law of cause and effect because in the absence of any action, effort, or activity, there can be no results. Results also affect our efforts—we tend to repeat those activities and actions from which our results could be termed “successful” and tend to avoid those activities from which the results could be termed “failure.” The results affect the “activity” or at least give the motivation for the activity, more in cases where the work is repetitive in nature and the process is clearly defined.

Results Are Classified “Objectively” Generally, while “Activity” or “Effort” Is Classified Personally

Results are generally categorized as success or failure at any given point of time, determined by your expectations. You either got the promotion or you did not, you either got the tender or you did not, you either got that client business or you did not, you either got that raise or you did not, either your painting sold or it did

not, either your book became a bestseller or it did not, either your client liked your assignment or he did not, and so on.

The activity or the actions call for a more personal classification, as it is determined by our inherent nature or passion. Think about it—whenever you are doing some work, either you love its activity part or you may not enjoy it. If I were to give a personal example, I love writing, researching, studying ideas for maximizing human potential, and sharing them with as many people as possible. Think about your work—business or job. Do you also enjoy the effort or the activities involved in your work on a day-to-day basis or do you just let the results determine your happiness quotient?

The “happiness” quotient during the activity strongly influences the results that the activity produces.

Basically what I am trying to say is that the “fun,” “happiness,” or “satisfaction” involved in any work done by an individual is experienced at two stages—once at the time of the activity, action, or effort, and then at the time of the result or outcome. *If we do not enjoy the work during the “process, activity, effort, actions” stage, we would be leaving our “happiness” at the mercy of the outcome or result. And note that there is a cause and consequence relationship as well, because if we do not enjoy the action, process, or the activity, it would adversely affect the quality of the outcome or result we produce.*

No one ever excelled at the subject they hated.

So if you feel unhappy or disoriented at your workplace, it is time to check your *Effort Love Quotient* (ELQ). There is no rocket science to it. When you do what you love the most, you come closest to reaching your full potential and your results start to change pretty quickly.

Do You Intend to Retire at 60?

As a part of my research, I interviewed a lot of retired people, and I concluded that at the end of our careers, we ask these questions to ourselves:

Did I spend 40 years of my life in the desired profession?

Did I work harder than it was needed?

Was it a good idea to postpone fun?

Do I have any regrets about my career?

Did I work to make a life or just to make a living?

What is my future after retiring?

No matter what stage of your career you are at, it is important to give a thought to these few basic questions. They might just help you in making wiser and fulfilling choices in your profession.

Why Not Retire Young?

Age is just a number but I am sure we all know that “that” number means something. There is a difference in the quality of your life when you retire in your 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, or 60s. I think one reason people think that they can retire only after working for 40 years, is because they never discovered their true passion in life. If you discover your true passion in life you can retire young, and will not have to postpone your happiness and pleasures of life to old age.

Why not explore the possibilities that exist for you? Why not go after the dream profession that you always wanted to be in? I know what you’re thinking. You’d love to change your existing profession, but it just doesn’t seem realistic. What if things did not work out?

I just have one answer to such doubts. What if I tell you that things will work out, if you work. Are you willing to work? Do you want to venture out on the liberating journey of following your dreams? Or do you just want to continue your journey for another 30–40 years on the predictable road you presently find yourself on?

Applying the strategies mentioned in this book, I retired young and so can you. One of the unique positions in life is when you do not “have to” work, and can “choose to do” what you love doing.

And I want to tell you that you can choose to retire young in your life. Once you start your journey on the road to passion, you will be effortlessly cruising towards excellence. You can choose to “struggle” in a profession that does not fulfil you or to “soar” in your passion and realize your true potential. I am not the “chosen one,” but I simply chose to be the “one”; and so can you.

Passion into Profession: Love Your Mondays and Retire Young

Passion into Profession is a new paradigm based upon factual evidence, strategies followed, and existing testimonials about the individuals who have successfully made a profession out of their passions in life. You do not have to do something that you do not enjoy for your entire life. For me retirement means when we start doing professionally what we “love doing” rather than “what we have to do.” This happens when we start pursuing our passion as a career and our work becomes the source of our biggest joy in life. It means to “start designing our work-life” rather than wasting it on merely “making a living.”

Anyone who is looking for satisfaction, excitement, passion, or fulfilment in their professional lives can adopt this paradigm and can transform their lives in a matter of a few months.

Is There a Better Way to Spend 100,000 Hours? Wake-up Call!

An average Indian starts working at the age of 21 and continues to work for about 40 years. Hence on average, an individual who works for about 50 workweeks in a year and 40 hours a week will spend about 80,000 hours at his workplace. This is based on the conservative estimate that people only work for 40 hours in a week and spend no time in commuting to work. If we include the average commuting time and increase the work hours to 50 per week, the total would will exceed 100,000 hours.

I am deeply saddened when I meet people who are stuck in a career, job, profession or business that does not nourish, nurture, and excite them every day. Is this all that their professional life has to offer? Their unhappiness at work spills over into their personal life too as they become permanently exhausted and saturated.

Do You Love Your Profession?

Recent surveys show that a lot of Americans are dissatisfied with their work and fantasize about leaving their current jobs. Surprisingly, despite higher salaries and better benefits, corporate workers are miserable.

As per the Deloitte Shift Index 2010, about 80 per cent of the people are dissatisfied with their jobs.

What's the scene in India? Two questions made it clear.

If we analyse the corresponding statistics for India, we would realize that the corporate scenario is equally, if not exceedingly, bleak here. And it is not uncommon to meet people who rant about their professional lives all the time. How did I reach this conclusion? Very easily, through observation and asking questions to thousands of people I have met over the past few years. You can also try the same questions with your acquaintances.

Do You Feel Charged Up and Superexcited to Go to Your Workplace?

I often ask my workshop participants how they feel when they are about to leave for their workplace—job or business—every day. Also how energized or drained out do they feel at the end of their workday. Just three or four people out of every hundred raise their hands to say that their work is one of the biggest sources of joy for them, and that they look forward to going to work every day. The majority of the people go anaemic at the very mention of their work-life; what is even worse is the acceptance of the fact that their work can never be a source of joy, pleasure, or happiness

for them. It is natural for them to spend 10 hours every day doing what they do not enjoy and repeating the routine five days a week for about 40 years of work-life.

Can You Speak for Two Minutes on the Following Topics—My Boss, My Manager, My Team Leader, My Project Leader, or My Colleague?

If people do not have a problem with their profession, they often have issues with people they deal with on a day-to-day basis at work. These people could be in the form of business partners, co-workers, subordinates, bosses, team leaders, or managers. Try asking any 10 people you know who are in any profession, to speak about their managers, bosses, or team leaders, and observe and study the description they give. “If only I had a better boss, my career would have been different” or “my manager is an idiot” is the song of their professional life. You would be really lucky to get two people out of 10, who really admire their manager and are fond of them.

It is out there in social media too. If you are not comfortable asking anyone about the love for their profession, or if you do not want to make them uncomfortable, there is a source that can give you a sneak preview into the work-life of people around you. It is not uncommon to see the following status updates on various social media sites every weekend:

- TGIF. Thank God It’s Friday. (900 million users of Facebook. Thousands of them on my network and I am yet to see a message that says “Thank God It’s Monday”.)
- Weekend! Finally you are here. What took you so long?
- Why does weekend have to end so soon?
- After Tuesday even the calendar says WTF.
- Is experiencing Monday morning blues.
- The work is killing me.

It Is Not about Starting the Business Either

You Cannot Abuse the Boss

Many people think that it is impossible to stay happy till the time you are in a job. If that was the case, all the business owners would have been the epitome of work–happiness. Unfortunately, the world is full of business owners who do not enjoy their work. They are not much different from the employees who hate their job; the only difference is that they are employees of family-owned businesses. In fact, they face worse psychological dilemmas because they cannot abuse the management, which happens to be their own family members. In worst case scenarios, this leads to bitter family fights, otherwise it is a “silent suffering” for the people involved.

The Failure Rate Is Very High

For many people, entrepreneurship means owning their own business. According to a University of Tennessee research on Start-up Business Failure Rate, about 71 per cent of the businesses fail by their 10th year. Then there are other surveys that tell us that only one in 10 businesses survive after the first 10 years. One reason why I think that the failure rate is so high in new businesses is that the owner(s) of the start-up were not very passionate about the business idea.

So Does That Mean Our Professional Lives Are Bound to Be Painful?

No, our professional existence does not have to be a source of pain for us or a drain on our energy. We can at any given point of time decide to take charge of our professional journey and take it to the desired destination. It just requires some planning and a little bit of nerve. The great news is that it is possible for each and every one of us to make this transition in our professional lives. During the

past few years, incredible opportunities have surfaced in the world to help us in aligning our dream career to our real career. It would be unintelligent of us not to leverage the opportunities available during the present times.

I know what you're thinking. You'd love to move to your dream careers, but it just doesn't seem practical or even possible. Everybody says you would be stupid to give up a steady pay cheque, corporate title, basic security, or established business, to take a chance on something new. What if you do not succeed? I just have one reply to that:

The biggest failure is to do something you do not enjoy for 10 hours a day, for 5 days a week, for about 40 years. Even if you have done that for the past few years, it is time to live your passion.

Was Your Career a Well-thought Out, Planned Decision, or Did You Just Do What They "Did"?

Our young generation is so careful about choosing the right life partner and finding the perfect soulmate. They are so careful, rather thoughtful, about this decision that they do not even mind going against the popular advice of family members, about a particular person as their life partner, if they think otherwise. I am tempted to ask this question to all the working professionals I meet: *How about the spouse called 'career' in your life?*

As I mentioned earlier, an average individual would spend anywhere between 80,000 and 100,000 hours at his work, stretched over a span of 40 years. This would mean that any working professional who spends 10–12 hours at work would spend more waking hours at work, than with their spouse. Did you choose your career because you were truly, madly, deeply in love with it? Or just like the majority of the people, end up following the popular advice of your family members or peer group? Some of the popular voices we often hear are:

"I-banking is where the money is." Really? Did you once bother to know where your heart is?

“Consulting is where the glamour is.” Really? Did you once ask if glamour was what you wanted?

“MBA degree is the key.” Really? But is it the key to the door you wanted to open?

“Private equity is the place to be.” Really? How much due diligence did you do?

“Be a software engineer.” Really? Was that the program you had designed for yourself?

“Law is the profession of the witty.” Really? Are you enjoying the humour?

“Corporate strategy will give you the kick.” Really? Hope you did not kick your own butt.

“Be a doctor, work till 30, and then make money till 60.” Really? How is life after 30?

If you are constantly growing emotionally and financially in your profession, congratulations! Because you are one of those rare species that chose the perfect work-life partner. However if you do not feel that sense of fulfilment and gratification every moment of your work, maybe you are married to a wrong profession. *Please note that there is nothing inherently great or terrible about these professions, but the person who is doing the work decides whether it fits him or not.* When it comes to work, we often forget that we have the freedom to “choose” a profession that makes emotional and financial sense for us, rather than just staying stuck in one which makes only financial sense, and sometimes even no financial sense. Trust me, changing or abandoning a boring profession for a fulfilling one is a lot easier than leaving a spouse—there is no alimony involved, and you will enjoy the emotional juice and vitality that flows from meaningful work.

Good News

There are many careers out there that can make you happy and might be your passion. All you need to do is to start accumulating

as much information as possible about these careers, and from as many reliable sources as possible.

Most of the financial fears and insecurities that have stopped you till now can be overcome easily with some strategic planning to ensure your smooth transition to the passion highway. Whatever profession you are in, you can expand your potential, your skills, and your abilities at any time, as you expand your horizons of what is possible. You just need to....

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- More than 80 per cent of the people go to a job they hate.
- When it comes to work, we often forget that we have the freedom to “choose” a profession that makes emotional and financial sense for us, rather than just staying stuck in one which makes only financial sense.
- The biggest failure is to do something you do not enjoy for 10 hours a day, for 5 days a week, for about 40 years. Even if you have done that for the past few years, it is time to live your passion.

Self-Awareness

- What are the things you like and dislike about your existing profession?
- How do you feel every Monday while going for work?
- Do you experience regular work-related stress? Why?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

Find Your True Love

Do not expect God to do for you that he can only do through you.

—ANONYMOUS

Passion: Your Million-Dollar Lottery

Once there was a man who lived in his small house with his wife and two children. He ran a small shop while his wife was a homemaker and took care of their children. He was a very religious and spiritual person and for seven years continuously every Sunday, he voluntarily served as caretaker at the local temple. As a result he gained the respect of all the people in the locality and knew almost everyone who lived in the neighbourhood.

He was a contented man, lived a very simple life, and was thankful to God for everything.

The Million-Dollar Dream

For five years, he got a recurring dream that he had won a million dollars in a lottery and that his photograph had been published in the local newspaper. He totally believed this dream because it would come only on Sunday when he slept in the temple veranda,

and not on any other day of the week. He considered this particular dream to be an omen from God, about his wealthy future. He had heard about the lottery company that gave a prize money of “one million dollars.” He remembered seeing the Monday newspaper carrying the photograph of the winner with the prize money, exactly the way he had seen himself in the dream.

Check the Newspaper

He never shared this dream with anyone except his wife, since he thought they would laugh at him. After giving his services and dreaming during his sleep at the temple, he would come back home and get ready for going to his shop. He worked hard and saved as much as possible out of whatever he earned. On his way back from the temple he would buy a newspaper every Monday morning. He would not open the newspaper without praying for an hour along with his wife. But to their disappointment, his photograph never appeared in the newspaper.

The Dream Date

He had been serving the temple for 17 years. Fifteen years had passed since the dream of winning a million dollars first came to him during the sleep. He had seen hundreds of photographs in the newspaper of people winning the lottery prize, every day. In his heart, he believed that when the time was right he would get his million dollars. “God’s delays are not God’s denials.” Besides he had never given services at the temple in anticipation of any monetary return.

Test of Devotion

Another 20 years passed. The husband gave up hope of winning the million-dollar lottery. He continued to go to the temple every

week. In fact, he even started thinking that God wanted to test his devotion by this dream—whether he went to the temple just for the sake of a million dollars. Even though he did not win the million dollars, his devotion towards God did not change an iota and he continued his weekly act of service.

Through his hard work and savings, he purchased two more shops next to his shop and converted it into a huge showroom, which was now handled by him and his eldest son. Over a period of time, he handed the complete ownership of the showroom and spent his daytime reading religious books at home and at the temple. He still gave his weekly service at the temple every Sunday, and used to get the same dream without fail.

Dreamed One Last Time

Time flew by and he was now in his 70s. His wife had passed away a couple of years ago but only after educating and marrying off her children, and thus had done her share of worldly responsibilities.

Once his wife passed away, his health started showing signs of deterioration. He was no longer able to clean the temple on his own and used to take his son along for the service. The son used to clean the temple and then return home, while the father stayed back and slept in the temple veranda. The son used to come to the temple on Monday mornings to pick up his old father and drop him back home.

One Sunday, the father was very ill but he insisted on going to the temple for his weekly routine. His children advised him to rest but he insisted on going. His eldest son dropped him at the temple, and after performing the rituals came back home since the father insisted on sleeping in the temple veranda. The old man sank into slumber and, for one last time, dreamed of winning the million dollars and his photograph being published on the front page of the newspaper with the prize money; that night he passed away

in his sleep. He died a happy man, who raised a good family and lived a great life.

The Devotee Meets His Maker

When he died he was sent to heaven for his good deeds. Over there he met God and thanked him for giving him space in heaven.

“You deserved nothing less than heaven, my simple man. You served my temple and my people during your entire life. This is the least I could do for you,” the Almighty said.

“Thank you, God, for giving me the opportunity to serve. I do have one question that somewhat puzzled me and my wife till the time we were there on earth; it baffles me even now. If You will permit, can I ask something? Every time I served the temple and slept over there, I used to get a dream of winning a lottery prize of one million dollars. You know I dedicatedly served the temple. Money was never my priority, even though my life would have been a lot easier if I had actually won that lottery. Were you testing my dedication by tempting me with a million-dollar dream?”

“No son, I was not testing your devotion.”

“So, You mean to say that You were not testing me, and wanted me to win a million dollars?” There was a tinge of disbelief in his voice.

“Absolutely, My son. I wanted to reward you for your service but...”

The man could not believe his ears and he interrupted. “If you wanted me to win a million dollars, then how come I had to struggle for money all my life. I am not complaining but I am not able to understand why I never won the million-dollar lottery. Answer me Dear Almighty, answer me,” he implored with tears in his eyes.

God replied, “Son, for 40 years I sent omens to you, in the form of a dream. I really wanted You to win.”

“I do not understand. You wanted me to win but still I never won the million dollars?” This time there was pain in his voice. His mind rushed back to all the years his family had spent struggling financially.

God replied, “You never won the million dollars in a lottery because *You never bought the ticket.*”

Your Passion Is the Ticket to Success, But You Have to “Get” It

Now, you might discard the story as a mere humorous story, but there is surely some element of truth in it. A lot of us know that passion is the key to success, yet most of us are waiting for our passion to discover us. *Let me warn you that if you are waiting for passion to come your way, you shall be waiting forever. Passion, purpose, or “true calling”—call it whatever you want to call—is not something to be waited for; it is something to be “explored” or “discovered” till you find it.* Learn to be a serious explorer in life, not a dabbling traveller.

Passion is a missing piece of puzzle that you discover through hit and trial. When you find it, it fits perfectly and you know that you have solved the puzzle of life.

Yes, sometimes others might show you the path to passion, but only you can walk on it and discover your true purpose. Or in terms of the story, “You’ve got to get that ticket.” *You might have to drift on the unknown waves for a while before you find the lighthouse of your passion. The important thing is to keep looking till you discover it. If you give up early you either caught the wrong ship or got drowned by the waves.*

Once you find your passion, you need to take action on it; in other words, live it every moment of your life. Most of us live our lives like the man in the story—either we do not believe in the dream or if we believe in the dream, we never buy the ticket. Believing in the dream is very important, but so is taking action on the dream.

The Responsibility of Finding Passion Lies with You

If you do not know your passion, trust me that it is ok to be confused. Bill Gates did not know his passion for writing software until he started. Steve Jobs did not know his passion for making computers until he started. Oprah did not know her passion for public speaking till she started. Sachin did not know about his passion for cricket till he started. J. K. Rowling did not know about her passion for writing until she started. The list goes on and on. You do not have to be passionate to start, but you have to start to be passionate.

Stories of thousands of successful people prove beyond a shadow of doubt that all extraordinary stories have an ordinary beginning. The responsibility of discovering your passion rests on your shoulders—roll up your sleeves and take it up as a challenging project of the utmost importance.

I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle.

—Steve Jobs, Stanford Commencement, 2005

Every time I read the text of the commencement speech by Steve, I realize that nobody else could have put it so well in words, the need for finding one's passion in life. I am sure there is a reason why Steve used phrases like:

“You've got to find what you love” *and not* “what you love will find you”.

“And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers” *and not* “love is not the word to be used for work”.

“So keep looking until you find it. Don’t settle” *and not* “just settle, you do not have to look for it”.

I am sure that with enough emphasis laid on the “need to find passion,” you would seriously start exploring the various options and opportunities available for your dream career. Seeking your passion, purpose, or true calling, is like seeking treasure; it requires some deep exploration and introspection. You just cannot expect to stumble upon the treasure, or by digging one or two holes in the ground, or by diving into the ocean a couple of times. You’ve got to look for it and keep searching till you actually find it.

Are You Passionate about Your Present Profession?

Think about it. Do you really want to spend your single life on work that isn’t meaningful? You do not have to, because a world of diversified options has opened up, sparked by passion, imagination, and creativity. And in order for you to reach these incredible opportunities available to you in this “passion-driven world” you need to know your present passion quotient.

Know Your Group

Take this quiz to find out if you need to make your Passion into Profession.

1. *Are you pursuing your dream profession?*
 - (a) Absolutely, cannot imagine myself doing anything else.
 - (b) I cannot say. I spend what I earn, on things I enjoy.
 - (c) What is that?
 - (d) No way.
2. *What do you think when you leave for work?*
 - (a) Cannot wait to start my workday.
 - (b) Go as per the usual time.

- (c) Feel lazy, try to delay as much as possible.
 - (d) Hate getting ready and leaving for work.
3. *If you won a million-dollar lottery, would you continue in the same profession?*
- (a) Definitely. I would spend a lot, but there is nothing else I would like to do.
 - (b) Cannot say. With my bills taken care of, I would like to explore and then decide.
 - (c) No way. I deserve a better profession.
 - (d) I would never work because I hate to work.
4. *What are your feelings toward your profession?*
- (a) I love and grow every day.
 - (b) It gives me enough.
 - (c) I am open to better opportunities with other companies.
 - (d) If money was not a problem, I would never show up for this work.
5. *What are your long-term professional goals?*
- (a) To learn, serve, and earn more from my existing profession.
 - (b) Does not matter, it depends upon the industry growth.
 - (c) To get out of the company.
 - (d) To get out of this industry or profession.
6. *Do you get the Monday-morning blues?*
- (a) Never.
 - (b) On important project dates, but I know how to handle.
 - (c) Yes, everyone hates Mondays.
 - (d) I get the every-night blues.
7. *How do you feel at the end of a workweek?*
- (a) Unique and happy.
 - (b) I do not think too much.
 - (c) Thank God, it's over.
 - (d) Hate myself.
8. *Where do you see yourself in 10 years?*
- (a) In my present profession, but at a much larger scale.

- (b) Earning five times what I earn today.
 - (c) In a different company.
 - (d) I do not know where I will be, but it would not be my existing company.
9. *Do you feel charged up and excited at work?*
- (a) Yes, my work juices up my life.
 - (b) When I get appreciation.
 - (c) At the time of appraisals or promotions.
 - (d) Rarely or never.
10. *How do you feel about your boss/manager or people you work with?*
- (a) They are the best.
 - (b) They do their work.
 - (c) I work with idiots.
 - (d) I work with my enemies.

Score based upon the options you chose.

Maximum answers were option “a”: Passion Group

You are living your dream career, and part of the blessed five per cent of all the total working population—people who are in love with their career. Your work is not just a source of income for you, but also one of the greatest joys of your life.

Maximum answers were option “b”: Indifferent Group

For you, work is merely a source of money, and you do not mind working hard till the time your efforts are well compensated. Maybe you never viewed your work as a source of joy in your life or you never got the opportunity to explore your passion.

Maximum answers were option “c”: Dislike Group

You dislike your work, but fear and do not feel engaged in your existing profession or job. You do not like the company you work for and would quit it at the first opportunity. Just like those in the Indifferent Group, your decisions are governed by monetary rewards.

Maximum answers were option “d”: Hate Group

You do not just hate your company, but also hate the industry in which you work. The very thought of going to work makes you sick. Your career decisions are governed by money consideration, and the feelings of fear and insecurity.

Discover Your Passion

The secret of success is making your vocation your vacation.

—Mark Twain

Do not be disheartened if you do not yet know what your true calling is, if your real purpose in life has eluded you till date, or if the word “passion” does not evoke an emotional response in you. None of the most passionate and supersuccessful human beings knew about their passion until they studied themselves and focused on a few new things. Your passion has always been there inside you, something as integral as your DNA, but the irony is that it lies there dormant, untapped, and unidentified for the most part of your life.

To discover or uncover one’s passion, we need to follow an inside–out approach rather than an outside–in path, and as they say, true education goes well beyond the four walls of a classroom. Passion comes from the inside–out; so, getting familiar with your own internal compass or guidance system is essential.

I strongly believe that anyone can identify his or her true calling in life if they pay attention to their feelings. This is not mumbo jumbo, but the path followed by the most successful people on this planet. Your greatest responsibility to yourself is to do whatever it takes to identify your passion, purpose, or true calling. The greater clarity you have about your passions in life, the more potential you would unleash for success in your life.

True passion is beyond the worldly measures of time, effort, reward, and selfishness. Hence if you want to discover your true purpose, it is very important to study your feelings associated with certain activities.

Your Love List

We should all have a list of things or activities that juice up our lives, give meaning to our existence, and make us feel vibrant, vital, and alive. What were you born to do? What are the special talents, abilities, interests, desires, and skills that make you unique—different from all other people? How do you know when you are doing what you are meant to do? I call it the “Love List” and it gets generated by identifying our passions, calling, or purpose in life.

One reason why people “do not get” what they want is that they do not know what they want. You cannot hit a target you cannot see. You cannot pursue a meaningful journey without a road map or a blueprint, unless you want to spend your only precious life as a drifter. The obvious disadvantage of being a drifter is that you do not get anywhere.

Figure out what you love to do as young as you can, and then organize your life around figuring out how to make a living at it.

—Pat Williams

It is impossible to be successful at something you hate, although it's very much possible to do “ok.” I believe that doing “ok” or just making it to the next day is not your objective in life; else you would not have picked up this book.

I have identified a set of five important parameters that can help you identify your passion in life and build your Love List.

Five Road Tests for Identifying Your Passion

1. You Lose Track of “Time”

What are the various “activities or things” that while you are doing them, you completely lose track of time? Passion has an element of timelessness ascribed to it. What are those activities when you are engaged in them that time stands still? You often forget to eat, drink, take breaks, or rest. Do not miss out on such activities; think about them in detail, and record them for they hold the key to your success. The opposite is also true if you are doing some work which you are not passionate about. You would feel restless and tend to check the watch all the time. What are those activities which take you to a trance, and it appears as if you are cut-off from the outer world? Have you ever been so deeply engrossed in some activity that people around you had to literally jolt you out of it? Ever lost yourself so deeply in some activity or subject? Any subject or activity for which you have an “attention-surplus” disorder?

2. You Get “Energy” while Doing It

Generally, work exhausts us and energy flows out of us to the point of work. However, when you are pursuing your passion, the direction of this energy flow reverses. Ever been involved in a physical or mental activity that charged you up completely? This is often referred to as being in the “zone.” What are those subjects or activities that serve as fountains of limitless energy for you?

As they say, “stress” does not come from doing “something you love for 18 hours”; it comes from doing “something you hate for 18 minutes.” What are those activities while you are pursuing them that the feeling of exhaustion is never experienced; rather the activity leaves you in a serene state of calmness and energy.

3. Effortlessness

What are those activities in your life with which a feeling of effortlessness is associated? It seems to come naturally to you, while it is difficult for most others. This does not mean that you are already a pro at them, but it simply means that you do not struggle while learning and mastering that craft. And just because you are willing to learn, the learning curve in such activities is very steep. You have a feeling of cruising along to nuances of the subject rather than getting lost in the woods of confusion. Call it “God-given” propensity or your “natural self,” you get a feeling of total immersion in the vast ocean of the knowledge, rather than drowning in the information overload related to that activity.

4. Beyond “Money” Problems

Most people choose a career based upon their financial requirements. While there is nothing inherently bad with money, their decisions are governed by the emotions of fear, insecurity, scarcity, and greed. Your true self uncovers when the emotions of fear and greed are not ruling your mind.

What are the things you would be doing if money was not a problem? A better question would be what are the things you enjoy so much that you are willing to do them for free? This does not mean that money will not come. Money being a by-product of the process of transfer of value will come for sure, if you are providing value to the society.

If social conditioning does not allow you to think like that, you can take an alternate exercise to identify your calling. Imagine that your bank account is credited with 10 million dollars tax-free. What are the various things in your life you would like to do professionally? If 10 million dollars is too little for you, imagine any amount that would free you from those worrisome bills, deadly

mortgages, and the material desires that make you take those short-term, compulsive, career choices that stop you from pursuing that dream profession.

You might argue that if you had that much money with you already, there would be no need for you to be in any profession. Alas! That is an illusion. The toughest thing in this world is to do nothing and sit idle. Once you are done with your spending spree, you would be scouting for professional opportunities.

5. You Are “Serving” a Cause Greater than Yourself

Take a few moments to think about your work and the people it affects. One way of identifying whether you are pursuing your passion or not is to check your “service focus” at the time of the execution of the work. When you are doing something you are passionate about, you would be thinking about serving others rather than catering to your personal needs.

What are things that give you a divine feeling of making a contribution towards fellow human beings? Study those subjects and activities, for they hold a clue to your real purpose in life. You give your best shot to such things because you know that you would be touching the lives of people around you. You are so busy helping others and making a difference that your personal problems are automatically resolved.

Do not feel disheartened if your activity or the passion list does not possess all these five traits. Any activity that passes one or two of these parameters deserves to be on your passion list and can juice up your life more than any other mundane profession would do. However, if you could find an activity where all these elements are present, it would be the “master key” to a passionate life. After counselling thousands of people, I can say with conviction that every individual can make a Love List that contains 5–10 such activities that they are really very passionate about.

Find something you love to do and you'll never have to work a day in your life.

—Harvey MacKay

Professions Related to Your Love List

After generating a list of activities that give you a “passionate” feeling about life, the next step would be to identify three to five professions, businesses, or jobs, corresponding to that activity on your love list. By focusing on your personal preferences, you will be able to better assess the types of work that will be personally satisfying.

In today's world, new technologies and economic advancements are creating hundreds of new professions every year. As per the Standard Occupational Classification data published by the United States Department of Labor, there are more than 840 categories of unique occupations existing in the United States alone, and these further have subsequent classifications.

Is it still very difficult to find three to five professions associated with each of the items on your Love List? I do not think so.

The more you live your life consistent with your passions, the happier, healthier, more positive, and energetic you will be. Once you are done with this exercise you will have a final list of 30–50 professions related directly to your passions in life. You can now choose to be a business owner, a self-employed professional, or an employee in any of these professions or passion areas. This is precisely why I said that you do not have to start a business to follow your passion in life. Our human spirit is too big for just a job or a business; we need a real calling for a happy life.

The only task at hand is for you to try as many things as possible and study your feelings while doing those activities. It will not take you very long to identify and build your Love List. So, break free from self-imposed limitations or the herd mentality, and step up to the golden opportunity of converting your Passion into Profession.

Don't Be a Cynic: Believe in Your Love List

Many people think that “passion” is a word that could only be associated with a limited number of professions, like sports, celebrity business, or pop music. This is the reason why they hesitate to make a shift from their mundane work to something they find interesting. They assume that all professions barring a few high-profile ones are meaningless and ultimately become boring over a period of time; nothing could be farther from the truth. These cynics do not realize that this assumption is robbing them of all the fulfilment and passion that they could get by making a career out of the things on their Love List. If you carefully study any success story, you will realize that it is always built upon the foundation of love and commitment. Your feelings of joy serve as your internal compass in identifying your passion in life.

“Passion” word is not restricted to one or two professions in this world. It can be experienced by any individual pursuing his “purpose” professionally, be it a doctor, lawyer, accountant, musician, scientist, politician, business owner, engineer, dancer, consultant, photographer, author, speaker, architect, designer, entertainer, comedian, teacher, sportsman, chef, painter, so on and so forth. Study successful people in any profession and you will see people in love with their profession. Study the people who are struggling or just “getting by,” and you will see a bunch of disoriented people trying to be someone they are not.

Let your passion decide the profession you should follow, because this is the only route to a fulfilling work-life. We all intentionally or unintentionally put the hat of an artist when it comes to executing tasks we are passionate about. The point I am trying to make is that no matter what the industry is, no matter what the position is, people who are very successful enjoy their work.

I hope that by now you have motivated yourself enough to think about your dream profession. But thinking is just half the job done; you have to live your dream as well.

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- You might have to drift on the unknown waves for a while before you find the lighthouse of your passion. The important thing is to keep looking till you discover it. If you give up early, you either caught the wrong ship or got drowned by the waves.
- Passion could be experienced by any individual pursuing his purpose professionally, be it a doctor, lawyer, accountant, musician, scientist, politician, business owner, engineer, dancer, consultant, photographer, author, speaker, architect, designer, entertainer, comedian, teacher, sportsman, chef, painter, so on and so forth.
- It is possible to spend thousands of hours studying to obtain the most advanced degree at the best university in the world without ever receiving one sermon on identifying one's passion in life.

Self-Awareness

- What are the 5–10 things you love doing?
- What are three to five professions associated to each of those 5–10 things?
- Find out three to five people who are already doing what you would like to do.

Action Steps

Write down three actions that you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

Part Two

Did I Live My Dream?

Section One:

Restoring Factory Settings

Loading Passion into Profession Program

You cannot speak of what you do not know. You cannot give what you do not have.

—ANONYMOUS

Now, since you have your Love List ready, your next goal should be to make a successful profession out of your passion. It is not easy. At the same time, it is not as complicated as you imagined. It requires some diligent effort and discipline, but the rewards are multiple and humongous.

If you have still not done the exercises mentioned in the previous chapters, I request you to go back and complete them first before you read any further. The forthcoming chapters would make much more sense to you if you have done all the exercises.

Get the Software Installed

I recently purchased a high-configured, desktop system for viewing our workshop videos. While the guy at the showroom was installing the operating system, I noticed that he was installing more programs than I actually needed or knew how to use. I asked him why he was doing so. He merely replied, “Sir, I am installing all the best programs related to videos. You can choose the one that

best suits your work. If the software is there on your system, you can learn and use it whenever you want.”

Then he said a thing that really registered well with me and hit the nail right on the head, “After all, you cannot use the program which is not there on your system.”

“Wow! This chap is really very smart,” was all I could say to myself.

On further thinking, I realized that what is true for computers is also true for human brains. “We cannot use a program which is not present on our system.” Identifying your passion is not sufficient; you should also have an implementation strategy or programme in your mind.

Are You Ready to Load the Passion into Profession Program?

Passion into Profession Program is based on thousands of hours of research done in the areas of human potential maximization. Success, like crime, leaves clues, and how well we study the trail of these telltale clues is going to determine how fast we will reach our destination, if at all we reach it. The program works if you work at it. It can help you get any result that you currently seek. The proper application of the program will catapult you to success beyond your imagination and help you in making a thriving career out of your Love List.

Exercise: Loading the Passion into Profession Program

Let’s make it fun. Write the words “Passion into Profession” on a piece of paper and place the paper on your head. Imagine the paper to be a program on a disc that you are trying to load on your brain. It might appear childish but it will serve as a good reminder for your memory that the program is already loaded in the system and all you need to do is to use it effectively. Studies have proven time after time that we tend to remember the experiences where our maximum senses are involved. So, go ahead. As you load the program in your brain, a particular error flashes on a screen.

Incompatibilities Detected

The system cannot detect the file because of certain incompatibilities present in your system. In order to proceed further, you are required to remove the incompatibilities.

The following six files are incompatible with the program you are trying to load:

1. Excuses
2. Dreamicide
3. Luck
4. Denial
5. Scarcity Mentality
6. Fear

Recommended Option

The incompatible programs can be eliminated by choosing the option called *Restoring Factory Settings*.

System Warning: After restoring the factory settings, you shall lose the above six incompatible files till the time the program stays on your system. However, not to worry. These files come up as “automatic default updates” and can be downloaded for free anytime from:

1. www.itsnotthatbad.com
2. www.thereisnohope.com
3. www.icannotchange.com
4. www.lifeisok.com or
5. www.atleastihaveajob.com

Passion into Profession Program is available only at workshops, seminars, and in books. And there is no pirated copy available.

5

Excuses

I do not believe in excuses. I believe in hard work as the prime solvent of life's problems.

—J. C. PENNY

One reason why we never get to know that we suffer from the disease of making excuses is that we rarely call them excuses. We label them as genuine reasons, or valid justifications, or sometimes even “truth” or “destiny.” We could get crushed under the guilt of making excuses, but very conveniently we escape this guilt by presenting excuses under the labels of genuine reasons, valid justifications, logical assumptions, or painful truth. Don't we?

So, What Are Your Excuses? Sorry, Reasons

One of the most important things I make my participants do while conducting my seminars is to fill in their “Top 10 Reasons” for not pursuing their passions, professionally.

There is a reason why I make them write “reasons” and not “excuses” right at the start. No individual will like to admit that he or she has given any excuses in life. Therefore “reasons” is a better term. Only on further prodding you get to know that they do have a lot of reasons for not pursuing their passion in life.

Over a period of time, I have built an “excuses database” and I think I have enough content to write my next bestseller on the topic “excuses.” I must admit that all the participants, aged between 18 and 65 years, are very creative in coming up with “reasons.”

Gone with 60 Excuses

I get a variety of responses but some of the most common ones are:

1. My parents never approved of what I wanted to do.
2. It is too early to start.
3. I do not know what I love doing.
4. I do not have enough capital.
5. I could not find the right people.
6. My brothers/family did not help me.
7. I tried but my friends cheated me.
8. I am not that smart or I do not have “what it takes.”
9. It is all written, I cannot change everything.
10. My father was alcoholic and abused me.
11. My mother loved my siblings more, hence never supported me.
12. I got married early.
13. My spouse does not understand my vision.
14. I am single and a single person cannot do anything.
15. I am the only child of my parents and have to support them.
16. My first venture failed, so I realized I cannot pursue my passion.
17. I am not a MBA or postgraduate.
18. My college was not a very good college.
19. I have an education loan for seven years.
20. I took a home loan for 20 years.
21. I have a lot of EMIs to pay.
22. I do not have an office set-up.
23. I was born in a middle-class or an average family.

24. For me, survival is a question. How can I talk about growth, dreams, or passion?
25. Our education system sucks; it ruined me.
26. I could be honest or successful, I choose honesty.
27. My family business gives me enough money; no motivation to act.
28. My health never supported me.
29. I do not have any friends.
30. I wanted to be a dancer, musician, or actor, but nobody allowed me to take the necessary training classes while I was young.
31. Sports are not respected in this country.
32. I could not find a publisher.
33. During my time, opportunities were very less.
34. I had the idea but did not have the technology.
35. I never worked for money.
36. Family always comes first; my dreams are not that important.
37. Why take the risk of trying? I might lose.
38. What will others think, if I do that?
39. I cannot afford to do that.
40. I do not have enough knowledge of my field of interest.
41. My communication skills are not very good.
42. I am not a very creative person.
43. I do not know how to sell.
44. I am not a very confident person.
45. I am waiting for the right time and opportunity.
46. My father/brother/sister/friend tried and they failed. Now I am afraid to try.
47. I do not have any talent or skill.
48. I am a woman, and it is a male-dominated world.
49. My problems are too big and too many.
50. My husband and in-laws will never approve of it.
51. I have too many friends/people around me. I do not have time for myself.

52. I have kids to take care of. I cannot afford to fail as a mother.
53. A married person cannot take any risks.
54. My parents were not educated.
55. I sacrificed my career for my younger siblings.
56. It takes too much time and effort to succeed.
57. I am a very practical and contented person.
58. I did not have good teachers, mentors, or role models.
59. I do not know when, where, and how to start.
60. I am a divorcee.

After reading these 60 excuses alias “reasons,” there must be at least five out of them which allude to you, and you know it. I end up wondering how good we humans are at stopping ourselves. We are so good at assigning permanent stature to temporary problems. And to avoid the guilt, we label our excuses as reasons.

Three “Reasons” for Not Believing in “Reasons”

1. Excuses Never Determine Who You Become, Unless You Let Them

One reason why I stopped believing in excuses is because I realized that it is never what happens to us that determines our destiny. It is “what we do” or “what we fail to do” with what happens to us, that determines our destiny.

If you read the list again, you will realize that human beings are the only species that has the ability to view any event, person, and resource with either a positive or a negative perspective. This empowering or disempowering meaning that they associate with the particular event, determines whether they will act in the direction of their dreams or choose the path of inaction. Sometimes I wonder what will happen if I make the following participants stand face-to-face and ask them about their “reasons”: “It is too early to start” participant and “It is too late” participant; “I am single” participant and “I am married” participant; “I am not an MBA”

participant and “I have an MBA education loan” participant; “I do not have friends” participant and “I have too many friends/people around me” participant; And “I have enough, so no motivation” participant and “My problems are too big and too many” participant. But I do not do that because we know that...

2. Excuses Will Never End

The truth is that I wrote only a miniscule percentage of the excuses that I get to listen to during the seminars. You can go to any extent in finding reasons behind “why things did not go the way you wanted them to.” Ask the person who is following his passion how he succeeded; the person will give you two to three good strategies that he used to succeed. Ask the person who did not follow his or her passion, and you can get 2,000–3,000 good reasons why things did not work.

3. They Make You Feel Miserable

The quality of your life is inversely proportional to the number of excuses you have in your life. Think about all the reason you have in your heart for not following your passion as profession. I can bet that whenever you think about them, you feel helpless and unfortunately it is the most painful emotion a human can feel. It is a very disturbing act to acknowledge that you do not have complete control over your life.

However, over a period of time, people have started cherishing this feeling of helplessness, and they try to make a “self-pity” club out of it. Do you know the names of the two clubs that have the maximum number of active members in this world? The two clubs are: “*Ain’t it Awful*” and “*Let Me Show You How Bad I Have Got?*” Think about it. You cannot feel good after telling people how helpless you are. Hence, if you have loads of excuses (or reasons) for not following your passion, chances are high that deep inside

you feel a lot of restlessness and helplessness, and because you have these two feelings on a constant basis you cannot take an action that can actually solve your problems. The intensity and the quality of one's actions determine the quality of the results we get in our lives.

Excuses, Justifications, and Reasons—All Belong to the Same Family (“Never Doer’s Next Door”)

Have you ever given *excuses* for your failures? Do you have any *justifications* for your failure? What were the *reasons* for your failure?

Did you realize something unique about these three questions? All of them end with the word “failure.” You might say, “Siddhartha, it is a cute little trick you are trying to pull,” but that is not my main motive. What I want to highlight is that we human beings use our rationalizing powers to our own detriment by labeling our excuses as “genuine reasons” to justify our failures. Very conveniently, you save yourself from the draining feeling of guilt by calling your excuses “reasons.” You might be able to earn a few sympathetic listeners for your sordid story, but eventually your story will end with failure.

The best thing you can do for yourself is to identify how your thought patterns are stopping you from taking action in the direction of your dreams. Our reasoning mechanism lies much below the obvious layers of consciousness; hence, sometimes it becomes very crucial to cross-examine our excuses, justifications, and reasons. What we are aware of can be controlled by us, but what we are not aware of controls us. It is the one of the hardest things to do but also one of the most important if you want to follow your passion.

What If It’s Not True?

No matter how strongly you feel for them, no matter how much you believe them to be true, it is still very important to question

yourself—“What if this is not true?” As someone correctly said, “Rationalizing is like rationing lies to ourselves.”

We all know that the human brain, our evaluation system, is engineered to react automatically to problems, limitations, shortcomings, or foreseen challenges. What we have not been so quick to realize is that the brain’s evaluation system which reacts automatically to the limitations, is the same system which tells us what the limitations and the challenges are. *Hence it is very important to “doubt our own doubts,” “limit our limitations,” “challenge the challenges,” “find problems with problems,” and “discover shortcomings in the shortcomings.”*

You are much more than you can imagine. There is no limitation that you cannot overcome, no problem you cannot solve, and no vision you cannot accomplish, by asking yourself the right kind of questions. There is no other way to success that I know of, other than developing the massive ability to counterquestion one’s excuses, justifications, or reasons. Call them whatever you wish to call them, but for your sake question them.

How to Wake Up the 97 Employees?

I am sure that by now you realize the importance of living life to the fullest, and using all the resources available to us for living the life we want to lead. I learned a long time back that our brain was the most powerful tool we needed for success, yet it was designed for only our survival, and hence if we wanted to leverage it for achieving anything more than mere survival, we needed to “wake” it up or “shake it” out of “survivor mode.” One question that I am often asked is how to get out of the complacent survivor mode and to get into the accelerated-growth mode of life? The only way to do so is by giving some commands to your brain, and these commands work best when they are related to goals that you are very passionate about.

Imagine your brain to be a factory where there are 100 employees on the payroll, but only three of them work. The 97 per cent of the employees just eat and sleep. The three workers who work produce enough to break-even or make small profits sometimes. Your brain, when in the survivor mode, is run by these three employees named Mr Excuses, Mr Justifications, and Mr Reasons. All three are very competent in meeting your day-to-day requirements, and make sure that “life is ok” for you. They do not let you take up big challenges in life; else they would have to wake up the remaining 97 employees since it would be too tough for them to handle the tasks all by themselves.

I call them the doorkeepers of the “treasure of limitless potential.” Hence, if you ever succeed in tapping your true potential, you would have to meet and handle the three doorkeepers in a very persistent manner. When you meet them only one of the two things happen—either you dominate them by your will and disciplined actions, or they succeed in keeping you in your comfort zone. If you succeed, your passion wins; if you do not, you are doomed for life to get “mediocre results.”

Whenever we communicate any life-transforming idea to our brain which does require some disciplined action, the first thing it tries to do is to dodge it because it freaks out due to fear of change—“more work,” “different work,” “new work.”

Your ability to deal with Mr Excuses, Mr Justifications, and Mr Reasons, will determine your success in the journey called Passion into Profession. All the successful people will tell you that they had to fight this constant, inner battle almost every day in pursuit of their passion. However, with time and practice it becomes your second nature, and living life at full capacity is the only way to live. It is the only key to understanding and unlocking human performance.

The Three Calls to Your Calling

Imagine having a telephonic conversation with yourself. This will help you in understanding the metaphor better. Before your brain starts to provide you any assistance on your passion list, you need to communicate your objectives very effectively and fight with Mr Excuses, Mr Justifications, and Mr Reasons. If you can sail beyond these obstacles, you will be well on your way to your dream profession.

Your task is to figure out ways to get over, under, around, and through these obstacles and you do so by communicating passionately with your own self. Let me explain this metaphor by sharing my own example.

The First Call (with Mr Excuses)

Tring-Tring

Me: Hi, this is Siddhartha and I want to start a business in the area of inspirational speaking.

Mr Excuses (generally gives the following excuses): “Hi Siddhartha. Are you sure about your decision? You should find some easier options. Your life is comfortable, what is the need? You cannot afford to take this risk. You might lose what you have made till now. What will others say? Your family would be unhappy with your decisions. You do not have the capital.”

And so on and so forth

Remember, you have the innate ability to eliminate excuses, which are nothing but the cries of a fearful mind trying to resist change. There's simply no question about this!

Do you think I would have been able to start the business of inspirational speaking and human capital training had I listened to what Mr Excuses told me? The answer is a big and unequivocal “No.” Anyone who intends to follow his vision has to go beyond

the examples mentioned by Mr Excuses and get ready for the next set of justifications.

The Second Call (with Mr Justifications)

Tring-Tring

Me: Hi, this is Siddhartha and I want to start a business in the area of inspirational speaking. I am not very much pleased with the excuses presented to me earlier.

Mr Justifications (sounds something like this): “Hi Siddhartha. I really admire you for your intent, but—it is a very competitive industry; you cannot start this business without any formal education in psychology; the market is very small, and there is not much growth in it; Indian consumers do not pay to listen to anyone, unless you are a celebrity; there are not many people in India who are famous for inspirational speaking; money is not that important for you, is it?; you have no special talent in public speaking.”

And so on and so forth.

The justifications might change depending upon the industry but they will be there for sure, to test your resolve and determination. After facing these personal devils of justifications, my next opponent was Mr Reasons, and I must admit he gave me a real tough, “logical” fight.

The Third and Final Call (with Mr Reasons)

Tring-Tring

Me: Hi, this is Siddhartha and I want to start a business in the area of inspirational speaking. I have already told Mr Excuses and Mr Justifications that I am not going to change my mind.

Mr Reasons (a very creative, friendly, and logical creature, he comes across as a very caring friend): Sure, Siddhartha. Really happy to know about your dedication towards your passions, but—it takes two to three years to establish a new business, do you

have enough savings?; you have got an excellent career in your present job; you should get a master's from an Ivy League college and secure your future first; you are 10 years too young to be an inspirational speaker or an author; you should first do a job in the training industry for three to four years before starting on your own; why would you like to try a tough road when everything is going smoothly?; hope you remember that acquaintance who tried to start his business but then screwed it up; you are just few months away from your next promotion; and so on and so forth.

You must have noticed that being human it is natural to reason out our decisions, but if our reasoning faculty is not well trained, we run the risk of catching “paralysis of over analysis.” Mr Reasons is very tactful throughout the conversation and the reasons presented by him appear to be in your best interests. Yes, they are in your best interest if you do not want to change anything in your life, but if you want to, you better not listen to these reasons.

Excuses are the nails used to close a coffin of our failures. Your dreams lie dead inside while you are mourning outside. They cannot come out till you remove all the nails—every single one of them.

And Then the Giant Awakens

Once you successfully handle the objections or obstacles presented by your own fearful mind in the form of excuses, justifications, and reasons, you are ready to awaken the giant workforce lying asleep within you.

Deep within man dwell those slumbering powers—powers that would astonish him, that he never dreamed of possessing; forces that would revolutionize his life if aroused and put into action.

—Orison Swett Marden

I must admit the toughest fight I had to fight was with me—my own fears. It took a lot of courage to not to listen to the inputs

given by Mr Excuses, Mr Justifications, and Mr Reasons, on my passions. I am glad I did, else this book would have stayed a dream and we would have never got an opportunity to spend some learning time together. Once you have mastered the inner battle you are now ready to take on the first outer battle of protecting your dreams from the claws of mediocrity and the masses. If you do not, you would be committing the ghastly act of...

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- Excuses never determine who you become, unless you let them.
- Your ability to deal with excuses, justifications, and reasons will determine your success in the journey called “Passion into Profession.”
- We all need to programme and train our mind to make this transition from “survivor” to “growth” mode. It is the only key to understanding and unlocking human performance.

Self-Awareness

- Are you following your passion professionally?
- Ten reasons because of which you are not following your passion.
- Do you think all these reasons would still hold true if analysed by someone else?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

6

Dreamicide

We all die at the age of 18-19; they get to bury us only when we are 80.

—ANONYMOUS

Roses Are Red, Not Green: Paint Your Life the Way You Want It

It was a chilly winter morning and a 12-year-old was standing outside the classroom, while his classmates were enjoying a drawing class. Those tiny little hands wanted to play with colours. Colours had always fascinated him, as if they were the medium to communicate what he was never able to express in words. With the paintbrush clenched in his tiny hands, he used to satiate the thirst of the white sheet with the opium of colours he had in his paintbox, and in the process quench his own thirst as well.

But today he did not have a paintbrush in his hands. The hands were bruised with the caning he had just received from his Drawing teacher. And as if the caning was not enough, she had made him stand before the entire class and humiliated him.

She had said to the entire class, while making fun of something he had painted on his drawing sheet, “Class, we have a student amongst us, who thinks himself to be the Van Gogh of the 21st

century. Look at what he has painted in the name of a rose! Have you ever seen a green-coloured rose?"

The entire class shouted in unison, "No, Ma'am." Even the students he considered to be his best friends had abandoned him at this moment of crisis. "Get out of the class and draw 10 roses on a paper by tomorrow. Write below each painting "Roses are red, not green." And he walked out of class, with bruised hands but more than that, a bruised heart—a heart overflowing with the pain of insult, a pain that was not visible or describable and yet very real, a pain that was inflicted on him not as a result of some physical injury but as an emotional scar on the very soul of his creativity.

A tear rolled down his right cheek when he made a futile attempt at following what his mom always told him—"Boys never cry." He wanted to cry and he wanted to cry out loud but he did not want to end up being a laughing stock of his entire class.

He did paint the rose 10 times as instructed by his teacher, but something happened to him that day. He made a silent vow to himself that he would give up painting forever. For the next 12 years, till the age of 24, he did not touch a paintbrush. What was once the source of the biggest joy of a 12-year-old kid had now become an ugly forgotten memory of an adult.

At the age of 24, while working on the Internet as part of his official routine, he came across an article titled "The Green Rose." The insult that he had been subjected to as a 12-year-old, immediately flashed on the screen of his mind. Even the physical pain of the bruised fingers reappeared at the very sight of the words "The Green Rose."

With trembling hands and a shaken heart he started reading the article. The article said, "The green rose is one of the most unusual little roses in existence and in cultivation since 1743. The biological name of the green rose is *Rosa chinensis viridiflora*. The strange blooms are made up entirely of sepals rather than petals. It seems it forgot to make petals, and so made the bloom up of more sepals."

He went back home and, after a gap of 12 years, managed to discover his old paintbox and brushes. The paint tablets had dried and the brushes looked like a ghost of what they used to be, but it did not matter to him that day. His painting skills had degenerated and he could not even hold a paintbrush properly, but it did not matter to him that day. He drew and painted a “Green Rose.” What he drew hardly resembled a flower, but it did not matter to him that day. It was just the freedom of his subdued spirit and the triumph of his imagination that mattered to him that day.

With tears of joy, freedom, and inspiration flowing down his cheeks, he wrote 20 times on the sheet that he has just painted—“Roses can be green.”

Picasso once said, “I paint the objects as I think them, not as I see them.”

Dear friends, did you give up something you loved because somebody said to you, “Roses are red, not green.” My advice to you is, “Paint your life with the colours of your own imagination, not just the colours others can see.”

Knowledge Is Power

The painting incident from my childhood is a painful memory, but I am so glad it occurred, although I must admit it was emotionally devastating for a 12-year-old kid. However, this experience taught me one of the most important lessons that I could have ever learned.

Never give up on your passion, dream, or hobbies, without proper research.

Well, I do not know if you ever gave up on any of your passions, dreams, or hobbies, because someone out of their limited experience and knowledge influenced you to do so, but I am sure that at one point or the other in your life, you must have heard a lot of negative statements about something you really wanted to

do. We all can have enough information—articles, books, audio–video programmes, seminars, and workshops about various professions in the world. Equip yourself with all the possible knowledge in your area of interest and you will unleash an indomitable spirit to achieve your dreams.

Did You Listen to “Dream Stealers”?

I am sure that at one point or another in your life, you have heard statements like:

“You cannot be a dancer.”

“You cannot be a photographer.”

“You cannot play that guitar.”

“You cannot be a cricketer.”

“You cannot be a footballer.”

“You cannot be a singer.”

“You cannot be an actor.”

“You cannot be a painter.”

Or something similar, when people around you said:

“Entrepreneurship is not everybody’s cup of tea.”

“Your business idea will not work.”

“Only one in 100 authors get published.”

“You cannot choose your profession, you can only hope.”

“It is the world’s toughest exam; do not expect to crack it.”

“There is no money in theatre.”

Or generic statements like:

“You can’t do that!”

“Who do you think you are?”

“Everyone will laugh at you.”

“Nobody has done that before!”

“Remember the last time you tried something like this and what a mess you made of that?”

“Why do you always think different?”

“Why do you always say and do such stupid stuff?”

“You don’t have what it takes.”

“Can’t you live like others?”

“You can’t have everything you want.”

“Money does not grow on trees.”

“It is impossible!”

The Dream Obstacles

These sentences are some of the major dream obstacles thrown at us by dream stealers (read our environment). Unfortunately, these words have power over us because most of the time they are uttered by the people we respect, love, and care for—family and friends. No wonder that so many of us do not go after our dreams.

How can we pursue our dreams with all the negative conditioning dumped on us carelessly?

The biggest mistake we make is to accept these random opinions of people as reality. No wonder we are always overwhelmed with negativity and resistance around us. However, they are not the key contributors or the decisive factors for whether one should give up on his or her dream. The decisive factor is whether we actually bow down to societal pressure and give up on what we always wanted to achieve for ourselves. There are countless examples of successful human beings who despite the negative dump, proactively chose to keep their focus on living the life they always aspired to live. We will talk more about this universal phenomenon, of not exercising the power to choose for oneself, in the next few chapters. In this chapter I want you to focus on the things you will miss in your lives if you blindly accept other people’s opinion as reality and how we all end up committing one of the most heinous crimes, directed at ourselves, called *Dreamicide*.

So What Is Dreamicide?

Remember the things that were there on your Dream List when you were 8 years old, and how your list changed at 18 years, 28 years, 38 years, 58 years old, and so on. If the list has changed because someone told you that it was not possible to do what you wanted to do, or any other negative opinion that discouraged you from taking action towards the fulfilment of that particular dream, then even you are accused of the hideous sin of *killing one's dream—Dreamicide*.

It is very important to listen to your calling in life, for only it holds the key that unlocks the door to the path of happiness, endless satisfaction, and a life full of abundance. Without it, you will always be struggling, lost in a whirlwind of activities, chasing the urgent instead of the important, and caught in a vicious cycle of existence that stops only at death. Do not die while you are still alive. Live life to the fullest, live your dreams.

The Importance of Dreams

Entrepreneurship starts with a dream; business plans always come second.

We all have dreams, don't we? Have you ever met someone who does not have any dreams, anything that they would like to do or have in their lives? I am not just referring to the visions that we see during our sleep, but also the ones that we see with eyes wide open. Take a moment to think. Don't you wish or aspire for something in your life—maybe better finances, better relationships, or better health. Dreams are nothing but personal thoughts of well-being for oneself, our loved ones, or fellow human beings.

I want to make one thing clear. Merely having dreams does not guarantee their fulfilment, since a "specified set of actions" is always associated and needs to be undertaken, before the dream

manifests as reality in our lives. However, if you are clueless about what you would like to “be, have, or do” in your life, having smaller and fewer dreams would be a good kick-start for you.

Not every dream gets accomplished, but everything that ever gets accomplished was once a dream.

“Dreams” and “goals” are used synonymously and I agree that more often than not, they are the same. However, I would just like to make a distinction—while dreams are generally timeless visions, a goal is a dream with an exact action plan and deadline in place.

We always tend to move in the direction of our dominant dreams, images, and visions. The very act of allowing ourselves to dream big dreams actually raises our self-esteem, and causes us to like and respect ourselves more. It improves our self-image and increases our level of self-confidence. It enhances our personal level of self-respect and personal joy.

Know Thyself: Know Your Dreams

The ancient Greek aphorism “Know Thyself,” which was inscribed in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, is actually the key to enlightenment and happiness. If we really aspire to be happy, we must spend some time in understanding ourselves—likes and dislikes, hobbies, passion, skills, desires, and dreams. Till the time you do not do that, you will be placing your happiness at the mercy of the events in your life.

Understand that there is a child in you that has got dreams of its own—a child that gets happy every time its dreams are recognized, acted upon, and achieved.

What are the things that you really, really want to do in your life? When was the last time you did that? I am sure you have already done the exercises mentioned in the previous chapters and are therefore clear about your dreams—personal and professional.

Four Antidotes for Dreamicide

Killing, aborting, or abandoning one's dream is an act which can be influenced by others, but it cannot be completed without your participation. As I often tell the participants of my workshops, *"Only you have the power to execute your dreams. You can either execute them to death or to fruition."*

What you do with your passion list is a matter of choice, and not circumstances. An aware human being is cognizant of the fact that the world out there can only give him a stimulus to kill the dream; whatever happens thereafter is a matter of response.

However, I really wanted to know the reasons why so many people who kill their dreams are so easily influenced by the "influencers"? It is only once we know the reason why people give up on their dreams, that we can do something about it. I realized that it was very important to ask ourselves the following four questions whenever we are about to take any important decision on our passions or dreams.

1. *Is It Really My Dream?*

I have seen countless doctors, engineers, accountants, and teachers who chose their profession just because somebody they considered an authority or an admired person of their family was in the same profession or wanted them to be in that particular profession. How many of us settle for the "real job" because somebody in our family believed it to be a "real" good bet? Similarly how many of us gave up on our dreams just because our parents had different opinions about them?

So many young people when they are growing up find themselves standing at a place that I call the "career crossroads." They do not know what they are good at and if they know what they are good at, they are not sure about taking it up as a profession. So they feel compelled to listen to the voices of "parents," "siblings," or

“family members and friends,” to start their professional journey. This course of professional voyage clearly has been decided by the knowledge, whims, desires, and the value systems of the “authoritative” figures. Children first see themselves through the eyes of their role models—parents, teachers, and siblings—since they do not have any other point of reference.

Even an innocuous comment made by any of these role models about any of their dreams is perceived as a fact by the gullible minds of the children. Even encouraging, intelligent, and well-read parents and teachers can steer their children in the wrong direction. Instead of encouraging a child to discover and research their passions, the parents pass a judgement on the passion itself based upon their own experience and perception. Sorry to dramatize things, but this is like aborting a foetus, without even letting the mother know about it. So many talents, skills, and potential careers could not see the light of the day, and sadly on the other front, some people took up jobs and occupations “only” because they were the “popular or realistic careers” in the eyes of their parents. Remember that what your parents consider the best profession in the world may not be the best profession for you.

This is also the explanation behind the midlife career crises that a vast majority of the population suffers from. And if you study the people who suddenly left an established profession to pursue something totally different, you can be certain that they realized that they had been following someone else’s dream till then and now they woke up to theirs.

Hence I strongly recommend all the people to check the propriety rights behind any dream that they have been pursuing—personally or professionally.

2. Can I See It Clearly?

Clarity about your passion energizes you, confusion about your passion paralyzes you—mentally, emotionally, and physically. You

may not have a clear path laid out in concrete in front of your eyes but you must have a clear path laid out in your mind, and it takes some diligent effort and research. It is not possible to figure out the minutest detail, but you should have considerable clarity of your overall vision. The rest unfolds as you move forward, and you take corrective actions and make a few adjustments on the way.

Clarity about the destination helps you in choosing the path and clarity about the path determines the speed with which you will reach your destination. I have seen a lot of confused people who hop from one profession to another, without researching properly about the next change. They are so sure about “what they do not want,” but when questioned about “what they want” they go silent. There are so many brilliant people who do not pursue their passion and give up on their dreams, because they do not have enough clarity on the same.

If we spend some time regularly in studying our passions, we gain clarity on them. This automatically impacts our self-belief positively. It also gives us a lot of valuable information on the best strategy we should use to bring our dreams to fruition. Besides, if we know and understand our dreams properly we can communicate them to the people in our lives.

“My parents never understood my dream” is one of the most commonly cited reasons I have heard for giving up on a dream. I think one reason why your parent could not understand your dream is that you did not have enough clarity on it to explain it to them.

You cannot show to others what you cannot see. You cannot explain to others what you do not know.

3. Do I Deserve My Dream?

One reason why people do give their dreams a shot, or abandon them on the way, is because at a subconscious level they consider themselves unworthy. A vast majority of people do not dream big

in life. The best they could think about themselves is to get a “9 to 5” job with a decent package, a house, and a car. They spend their entire lives being realistic and reasonable, and in the end all that they get is an average life.

Many people do not begin on their passions thinking that they might lose the love of their near and dear ones, or the happiness that comes with the passion is short-lived. After coaching hundreds of clients over the past few years, I can say something with certainty—“It is true that people are afraid, but the ironical and stranger fact is that people are afraid of success!” During the 20–30 hours of coaching sessions I have with my clients, around 30 per cent of the time is spent in setting them free from the limiting thought patterns and working on their self-image. How you see yourself has a direct impact on how big you dream and what you do about that dream.

I suggest you go back to your passion list, and ask yourself this one question for each of the passions listed—“Do I think I deserve to create a successful profession out of this passion?” Observe the answers your mind will give you. If the answers are positive, your self-image is well in shape, but if the answers are drenched with the emotions of unworthiness, success-anxiety, you’d better work on your self-concept. Eliminate these self-destructive emotions of unworthiness before they destroy your intent of taking action towards your dreams.

The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark.

—Michelangelo

4. Are You Willing to Pay the Price?

Everyone intends to live a life of passion, fulfilment, and joy, but only a precious few are willing to take the requisite action

on their intent. Are you willing to compromise and give up the “comforts” and the “security” of your established profession to try your passion? Are you willing to leave the “known” for the “unknown”? Many people are looking for a “guarantee” when it comes to following their passions and dreams in life. I meet so many of them on a daily basis and they just have one question on their faces, “Sid, I would love to do this but will it work? Is there any guarantee for success?”

Although I appear calm and polite, in my mind I am shouting and screeching out of agitation that I shout inside, “It will work, only if you work. Yes, there is a guarantee and that is *you*. If you believe in yourself and are willing to follow your passion with ‘whatever it takes’ and ‘no matter what happens’ attitude, you would be successful.”

Plunging into the ocean is just the half battle won and thus not enough; you have to learn how to ride the right waves, and to come up if you get hit by the wrong one. The best answer I give to “Will it work?” type of questions is by asking a powerful counterquestion, “Are you totally committed to make it work?” If you will make it work, it will work; else you do not stand a chance. Some succeed because they are destined to but most succeed because they are determined to do so.

There is a price for living your dreams, and there is a price for not living your dreams. You have the power to choose which one you would like to pay. Also if you pay the price to live your dreams and passions, life rewards you back multiple times for all your efforts.

Many people give up on their dreams, and thus live a life full of mediocrity because they choose petty short-term pleasures over long-term happiness.

I think you can accomplish anything if you're willing to pay the price.

—Vince Lombardi

Do Not Give It Up Because of the Family—NEVER!

Sometimes, while taking a decision about our dreams, we need to think about the impact any decision can have on our family members—parents, spouse, siblings, and children.

“I wanted to be a musician. But my mother wanted me to be a chartered accountant; hence I became one.”

“I wanted to be an interior designer. But my dad wanted me to do my MBA; hence I did my MBA.”

“I wanted to be a theatre artiste. But my family wanted me to find a safe, secure job; hence I got this good, paying job.”

“I wanted to be an engineer. But everyone is a doctor in my family; hence I too became a doctor.”

“I wanted to start my business. But my wife is a homemaker; hence I can never start a business.”

“I cannot stop earning even for a few months because I have a small kid and I need to secure her future.”

“I gave up my dream career because being a woman it’s my primary responsibility to raise my family.”

Not sure if your love for any of your family members is stopping you from living your passion, but these are the most common statements that I get to hear from my workshop participants. These concerns may be genuine and the sources of all of them are the emotions of deep love, care, affection, and responsibility towards the family. The best gift you can give to your family members is to live your passion. They might not be able to support you in your passion, but you should never hold them responsible for your mundane, meaningless, and passionless existence. Do you want to see the face of a hangman in the faces of your family members—a hangman who forcefully hanged your dreams to death? Don’t you think it is an insult of their love towards you? Can’t you find a better way? You can, only if you choose to.

Because true love never keeps a man from pursuing his destiny.

—Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*

Think Win-Win

I advise my clients to think win-win, because only if you are happy your family members would be happy in the long run. Reconstruct your pessimist sentences in the following ways:

“How can I do what I love doing and make my family proud of me?”

“How can I start in such a way that I get to do what I love doing and still meet the basic family responsibilities?”

Think about it. How heartbroken would your mother, father, spouse, children, or sibling be if they get to know that because of them you were forced to live a passionless life? I think it would add to their happiness even if you go against them in the short run only to make them proud in the long run. They will respect you even more. I can say this personally because the more I follow my heart, the more respect I receive from my family members and friends.

Be very careful with what you do with every single day of your life, for the day will come but once in your life. Be very careful with the path you walk every day, for it will lead you somewhere and only you can decide if it is the place where you want to be at the end of the journey. If you feel that you are being compelled or influenced to follow a path that is not meant for you, remember that you always have the choice—the choice of continuing down the wrong road or to take the path of your true calling in life. Now that we have discussed the importance of living our dreams, we need to face the next big challenge.

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- Never give up on any of your passions, dreams, or hobbies, because someone out of their limited experience and knowledge influenced you to do so.

- So many people chose their profession just because somebody they considered an authority or an admired person of their family was in the same profession or wanted them to be in that particular profession.
- The four antidotes to dream killing—ownership, clarity, self-worth and willingness to pay the price for the dream.

Self-Awareness

- What are the five things that you enjoyed doing in childhood but gave up during your adult years?
- Did you always want to be in your present profession?
- If not, did you do enough research before giving up on your passion?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

7

Luck

Shallow men believe in luck. Strong men believe in cause and effect.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Success—Is It a Matter of Luck?

Imagine yourself to be the owner of a business magazine. You are interviewing a candidate who has applied for the job of a reporter. She appears to be very smart and intelligent, and has even secured the top position in the business journalism course at her university. As part of the final selection process you give the candidate the responsibility to write about some of the most successful entrepreneurs who have significantly contributed towards the way we live our lives. The magazine does not want any detailed explanations or interviews to be published. Hence you have clearly told her to focus on just the most important factor that determined their success. A prepared set of questions about a few successful people has been handed over to her. She is required to answer the following ten questions in a week's time by researching about them:

1. Bill Gates of Microsoft: How did he start Microsoft and become the richest man in the world?

2. Steve Jobs of Apple: How did he launch the first personal computer and other successful products like the iPod, the iPhone, and the iPad?
3. The Wright brothers: How did they invent the airplane and change the way humans commute?
4. Henry Ford: How did he invent assembly line manufacturing?
5. Mark Zuckerberg: How did Facebook reach 800 million users in a short span of seven years, and make him the youngest billionaire?
6. Indra Nooyi: How did she become the chief executive officer of Pepsi Inc.?
7. Thomas Edison: How did he invent the incandescent light bulb and start GE?
8. Larry Page and Sergey Brin: How did they create Google?
9. Richard Branson: How did he start the Virgin group and make it so successful?
10. Oprah Winfrey: How did she become the first black woman billionaire?

After one week, she submits her report and you find the following answers:

1. Bill Gates: He *luckily* developed an Altair emulator that ran on a minicomputer, and then the BASIC interpreter, which resulted in Microsoft being created.
2. Steve Jobs: He was *lucky* to be present at the time of the personal computer revolution.
3. The Wright brothers: They were *lucky* to invent the three-axis control, which enabled the pilot to steer the aircraft effectively and to maintain its equilibrium.
4. Henry Ford: He invented an automobile by serendipity and then got *lucky* to develop the assembly line technique of mass production.

5. Mark Zuckerberg: *Luckily*, he launched a product that clicked well with the youth.
6. Indra Nooyi: She got *lucky*; there was no other woman contender for the top job.
7. Thomas Edison: He was very *lucky* that the light bulb he invented was in great demand.
8. Larry Page and Sergey Brin: They were *lucky* because they were at Stanford, which promoted research.
9. Richard Branson: He got *lucky*, because Virgin brand became a rage among the customers.
10. Oprah Winfrey: At age 17, Winfrey *luckily* won the Miss Black Tennessee beauty pageant, and was then noticed by local radio channels.

Honestly, what do you think of her research skills and ability to explain the success these people have achieved?

Will you hire her for the business reporter job?

Well if the answer is yes, she must be really very *lucky*.

They are not “lucky”; they are “smart” action-driven people.

The successful people create their own luck—that is what makes them successful. They are not afraid of going the extra mile, or finding a shortcut, engaging in constant improvement, trying new things, taking risks, talking to strangers, or visiting new places.

Were they born under a lucky star? Do they get success all the time? No. They are people who perceive a possibility, see the opportunity, and take action to convert it into something positive, which has a measure of success. They don’t just see an opportunity; they act on it while the average person is still contemplating. They are observers who pay attention—to needs, to challenges, to perplexing situations, or to difficult tasks that average people try to stay away from. They never feel shy of asking people’s help or making that “comment” that might backfire when it comes to seizing the opportunity. Regardless of whether their moment of

serendipity turns into a job, a vacation, an unexpected prize, or a business venture, they are always open to change.

“Luck” Is Ridicule

If you are calling somebody “lucky” you are in a way degrading the achievements and the success story of that individual, and negating the hard work they did to achieve success. Think about your five biggest achievements in life. Now, imagine if people around you label your achievements as “luck.” How would that make you feel? You can do the following “fill in the blanks” exercise to comprehend what I mean:

You got good marks in academics because “you got lucky” with _____ .

You got that job because “you got lucky” with _____ .

Your business succeeded because “you got lucky” with _____ .

I can bet that if someone attributes “luck” as the key success factor behind all your achievements, your relation with that person will turn sour. Yet we attribute “luck” as the key factor behind other individuals’ successes or achievements. If you want enemies, start calling people “lucky” whenever they achieve anything.

Luck Is a “Lame” Excuse

If you really want to be successful in life, “luck” is one word that you should eradicate from your vocabulary. As we have seen already, it is a very poor explanation for success. If you study any successful person carefully, you will be able to decipher the exact strategy that they consciously or subconsciously pursued to become what they are. It would have always involved a certain set of actions. The actions might have been very simple or complicated, but nothing happened solely on the basis of luck. *People who are generally called “lucky” are the people who start achieving things in a better and faster manner than the people around them. However, what*

these mediocre people fail to see is a “clear set of actions” that the individual took for expediting his or her success.

We all have had our share of “bad days” or “tough days”; but the people who really get on in this world and achieve massive results, are the ones who truly believe that they create their own success. They know that the power to emancipate themselves from the phase of “tough times” lies in their hands.

Five Observations on the Subject of “Luck,” Which Have Served Me

1. “No amount of luck can serve you, if you do not prepare.”
If your opportunity comes but you are not prepared for it, you will make a fool of yourself.
2. “Most of the people do not invest time to identify ‘critical factors’ behind any success, and when asked to explain they attribute it to ‘luck’. On observing seriously you will realize that it was not luck but smart work.”
3. “If you rely on luck, you will never be able to produce what I call ‘success at your will’ or as per your terms and conditions.”
4. Belief in luck weakens self-reliance and the ability to take requisite, intense action during tough times.
5. It erodes self-esteem and confidence. If we do not take credit for our success or failure in any area of our lives, and attribute it to a factor outside our control, we damage our self-worth.

Believe in Luck If You Want to, But Do Not Rely on It

An American scientist once visited the office of the great Nobel Prize-winning physicist Neil Bohr, in Copenhagen, and was amazed to find a horseshoe nailed to the wall over his desk.

The American said with a nervous laugh, “Surely you don’t believe that a horseshoe will bring you good luck, do you, Professor Bohr?”

Bohr chuckled. “I believe no such thing, my good friend. Not at all! I am scarcely likely to believe in such foolish nonsense. However, I am told that a horseshoe will bring you good luck whether you believe in it or not! How can one argue with such logic?”

I totally endorse Neil Bohr’s “horseshoe for luck” philosophy as the way of life. There is no harm in believing in good luck till the time it does not make us lose sight of the fact that we can achieve anything in our lives if we are willing to pay the price. Stop leaving your professional destiny to a random roll of dice; instead learn to plan, strategize, and execute.

Luck, Opportunity, Chance, or Destiny

I often ask the participants at my workshops, what are the major resources that they think they need to be a success in life, or to reach the goals they have set for themselves. It is not uncommon to see a four-letter word called “luck” featuring in most of the list of resources prepared by them. In fact, it is present in every list, with different names—like “opportunity,” “chance,” “first break,” or “destiny”—if not mentioned as luck. For me all these names mean the same thing because they place a factor outside “you” which defines and controls your ability to succeed rather than placing the power to succeed inside of you.

Once the list is ready, I ask the participants a couple of questions:

1. ***Can You Produce Luck in Your Life Anytime You Want It?*** All of them answer “No.” Hence my first attempt is to make sure that they do not believe in any factor as a prerequisite for success that they cannot produce at any point of time they want. When you stop seeing luck as a necessary element of success, you stop relying upon it and then you start depending upon much more reliable sources or causes

of success, rather than depending upon an unreliable entity called “luck.”

2. ***When Did You First Start Believing in the Concept of “Luck” in Life?*** Is it because you tried something in life and did not get it or is it because someone around you got something that you believe they did not deserve? Ninety-five per cent of the time, it is the latter. Luck is there for everyone to leverage and if it is not showing in your life you should concentrate on your loopholes. What are the 10 things that I can do immediately to get “lucky”?

Luck is nothing but “labour under correct knowledge.” If you use the knowledge and the power of these three questions, you get a lot of luck in your life. And even if you do not get it, you will not need it to succeed.

Be prepared, work hard, and hope for a little luck. Recognize that the harder you work and the better prepared you are, the more luck you might have.

—Ed Bradley

Luck: Stop Blaming and Stop Complaining

Another sane advice that I would like to share is that people should immediately stop blaming and complaining about the “lack of good luck” or the “abundance of hard luck” in their lives. As per the law of attraction, whatever we focus upon we tend to attract more of it in our lives. Blaming and complaining is like “focusing with a magnifying glass.” People tend to blame their own luck if someone else makes it “big” or “strikes” gold in life. I suggest that such people not blame luck, rather spend their time and energy to study the reasons or the strategy behind success and then implement the same in their own lives. If they do so, very soon they will be able to enjoy the same results and find themselves on the side of the angels.

If someone else became successful, stop holding “good luck” responsible for it. Even if successful people tell you that they are lucky, invest time in researching about their success rather than just accepting their answer as the sermon from the Vatican. Once you become a dedicated student of life, you will realize what people unknowingly label as “luck” is nothing but a manifestation of the law of cause and effect. There are no “causeless” effects in this universe. Your present level of health, money, and relationships is an effect.

Then there is another set of people whom I call “the complainers.” They are always complaining about the lack of resources as the key reason for not following their passions. What they do not realize is that most of the factors they have on their “complaint list” are not the factors actually determining their success. All the resources that they need for success are already within them, but they ignorantly live their lives suffering from scarcity mentality.

The only good luck many great men ever had was being born with the ability and determination to overcome bad luck.

—Channing Pollock

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- Most people do not invest time to identify “critical factors” behind any success, and when asked to explain they attribute it to “luck.” On observing seriously you will realize that it was not luck but smart work.
- Helpless people always believe in luck, while successful people believe in labour to bail them out.
- When you stop seeing luck as a necessary element of success, you stop relying upon it and then you start depending upon much more reliable determinants of success.

Self-Awareness

- Do you believe in luck? Why?
- Did you believe in luck without even trying your passion once?
- Assuming luck does not exist, if you have to write down five critical success factors in your passion, what would they be?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

8

Denial

Dissatisfaction with possession and achievement is one of the requisites to further achievement.

—JOHN HOPE

The Prison

Once there was a prosperous village in a remote part of a country. The village also had the country's largest prison, which had thousands of innocent inmates serving their life-term because they had revolted against the cruel dictator of the country. The prison area was divided into nine sections, each of which housed an equal number of inmates. The village council had nine headmen who wanted to help the innocent prisoners but were unable to do so due to the tyrant dictator. Eight of these village headmen were affluent but the ninth one was not of a rich background. However, the villagers respected him for his laconic style of conversation and wise actions.

One day the village council received the good news that the tyrant dictator had died due to a heart attack. In a meeting that followed, each member of the council was assigned one section of the prison. All the nine men eagerly looked for the best ways to end the suffering of the prisoners of their section and to reward them for their hard work.

A Help on the Appearance

The first village counsellor who was an image consultant by profession realized that the attire of the prisoners was very dull and boring. They had only two sets of uniforms that they had been wearing ever since the time they came to the prison. He ordered 10 pairs of designer and branded clothes for each prisoner. They were also given a comfortable work-uniform for their working hours. He also allocated funds for the prisoners to buy sunglasses and watches for themselves. They were also given a monthly shopping allowance.

He thought that by working on the image of the prisoners, their suffering would end.

A Help on “Experiencing” Emotions

The second village counsellor was a psychologist who believed that experiencing emotions on a daily basis was the only key to happiness. He realized that the prisoners were living a very “mundane” existence, and they had lost touch with the feelings and emotions that an average man experiences on a day-to-day basis. In order to solve the problem, he installed a movie projection system and television sets in the section allotted to him. He purchased thousands of movies and music recordings, so that the prisoners after doing their work could vicariously derive emotional pleasure from these sources. The prisoners could also watch the various soap operas on television sets every evening.

He thought that by experiencing emotions through movies, music, and tele-soaps, their suffering would end.

A “Spiritual” Help

The third village counsellor was a spiritual person and the head priest of the village. He believed that love for material things was

the source of all pain, and the key to happiness lies in detachment. He believed that through practice one can control the mind and hence what it desires. He started mandatory meditation classes for the prisoners, followed by the chanting of the mantras from the holy scriptures.

He thought that by following the path of spirituality, they would free themselves from all the sufferings.

Better “Work Conditions” Help

The fourth village counsellor was an industrialist and believed that it was very important to improve the working conditions of the prisoners. He knew that the prisoners spent a majority of their waking hours working; hence without taking care of the work-related grievances, their suffering could not end. He ordered air conditioners and power backup systems where the prisoners worked laboriously. Instead of 12 hours of working in the heat six days a week, they were now working only for five days a week. He believed that by making their work-life comfortable, their suffering would end.

A “Comfortable” Help

The fifth village counsellor was a luxury home consultant. He believed that work was part of life and not the heart of life. He aspired to do something to make the after-work hours of the prisoners comfortable. He renovated the sleeping rooms of the section assigned to him, fitting them with air conditioners, comfortable beds, and couches.

He believed that a good sleep and comfortable living would be the best gift to give to the prisoners; who had spent years of their life sleeping on the jail floor.

Let Them “Socialize”

The sixth village counsellor was a communication expert and he realized that the prisoners did not have any connection with the outside world. He provided laptops with Internet connection and cell phones to prisoners so that they could be connected with the outside world—friends and relatives. The prisoners in his section could freely communicate with their friends and family members outside, and were updated on the latest trends shaping the world.

He believed that staying updated on the events and talking to their friends would alleviate their pain.

Fit Mind in a Fit Body

The seventh village counsellor was a fitness trainer by profession. He completely believed in the philosophy that “a healthy mind can live only in a healthy body.” According to him, most of the inmates were not living a healthy life and therefore were unhappy.

For the prisoners in the section assigned to him, he opened a health gym-and-spa facility. The prisoners could now workout and relax themselves after their work.

He believed that once the inmates got used to healthy living, their suffering would end.

Food Therapy

The eighth village counsellor was a restaurant owner and while he visited the section assigned to him, he realized that the food which was being served to the prisoners was low on nutrition and unhealthy. The menu had been the same for years and they had never received a taste of fine dining throughout their entire sentence. He changed the daily food supply, and built a dedicated food kitchen and cafeteria, to cook and serve high nutrition food,

to give them the best cuisines, and to give them the best possible food experience.

He thought that people are what they eat, and if the prisoners were happy with their food they would ultimately be happy.

Freedom

The ninth counsellor thought on different lines. He simply procured the keys of the section allotted to him and freed all the inmates.

He believed that true happiness came when you had freedom to choose in life. By freeing the prisoners he gave them the power to become someone, do something, or have anything they want in their lives. In the absence of freedom, no material comforts or meditations would end their suffering.

Which Counsellor Helped Them the Most?

We may not be serving a life sentence in a prison, but we surely are living our lives in this world with a certain set of self-imposed limitations. These limitations may not be as apparent as the iron bars or the concrete boundary walls of the prison. And just like the prisoners in the story, we have learned to “suffer in comfort” by indulging in certain short-term pleasures, at the cost of long-term freedom.

True success comes from living a life on your own terms—a life immersed in passion and fulfilment. It is a very liberating experience to know that we all have the freedom to live our passions, if we refuse to get distracted by the imposed success. Taking charge of your life and being cognizant of your power to design it is the best gift you can give yourself. *This is the magnificent gift that the ninth counsellor gave to the prisoners—the power to choose their own success.*

Prisoners of Hope

According to worldly standards, you might be a brilliant engineer, a supersuccessful lawyer, a wealthy business owner, or a powerful manager of a *Fortune* 500 company, but if you are not following your passion you would feel trapped in a prison of your own making, suffering in comfort, and serving a life sentence.

You cannot get out of a prison unless you believe you are in one.

—Anonymous

Most people never discover or focus on the true source of happiness—the ability and the freedom to live their passion. They get stuck in the professional prison where they serve their life sentences, occasionally finding an escape by over indulgence in shopping, drinking, socializing, and staying in the comfort zones forever. No wonder that when they reach the end of their professional career, they have only one question to ask—“Is that all there is?”

Does Your Work Engage You Emotionally?

Ask yourself honestly, does your job or business make you feel enthusiastic, excited, and alive or is it merely routine work for you? What amazes me the most is the number of people who live in a constant state of denial; they are afraid to admit that their existing profession does not engage them completely, or provide them any sense of fulfilment. They are busy being busy. They stopped learning and growing in their profession long time back, and now they just show up for work only for money. *Yes, money is an important reason to work, but it should not be the only reason for work.* Don't you want to work differently? Why not make excitement, enthusiasm,

cheerfulness, outrageousness, or playfulness a new priority for your professional life rather than having only monetary expectations? Make “feeling engaged” your most important expectation from work-life.

Leaving a promising job with a world famous company was a tough decision for me, but it was not that tough when I thought of the promises I had made to myself. In hindsight, it turned out to be one of the best decisions of my life. Working with thousands of people gives me a sense of fulfilment—a passion that I always craved for while working in a job.

Just ask yourself, what is really important to you? Be honest with yourself. Don’t fool yourself.

Promotions and Pay Hikes are “Moving Goalposts”

It is interesting to study people who spend their entire work-lives chasing pay hikes, appraisals, and promotions. When they get them as per their expectations, they are happy; when they do not, they feel cheated. Our company, Success Monks, did detailed research on “positive work psychology” with 50 companies and thousands of their employees.

One of the questions that was asked to the employees was, *“How many days on average were you happy after your promotion/hike/appraisal/bonus?”*

When we compiled the results of the study we were shocked to find that any monetary reward resulting from promotion, hikes, or appraisal in most of the cases did not last beyond 7–14 days.

What the majority of the people do not realize is that the promotions and hikes in your work-life are satisfiers and never a permanent cause of happiness. Happiness at workplace is a moving goalpost and the only way to score a goal is to find meaning in your work.

Are You Pretending?

1. To have 10 years of experience, while what you actually have is one year of experience repeated 10 times.
2. To be an expert on the industry that does not mean anything to you.
3. To be in love with your job, when all that you are bothered about is the pay cheque.
4. To be in love with your profession, just because you do not hate it.
5. To be motivated about your company's vision only because you want to motivate your team members and colleagues.
6. To enjoy the freedom of operation given to you by your company, while in reality you feel trapped because of the mortgage and the car loan.
7. To have a busy corporate life while all you are doing is trying to dodge work that comes your way, handling only what you cannot avoid.
8. To have a great work-life balance, while in reality you are always worried about work.
9. That changing the company would solve your problems, while your last few job hopping did not help.
10. To respect your boss or manager because of the corporate hierarchy, while in reality you believe him to be an organizational liability.
11. To be happy because you know how the FMCG or the steel industry would grow during the next five years, while you are clueless about your own career growth.
12. To enjoy your work just because your peers believe that you have got the best job.

Remember, pretending will not take you anywhere; truth will.

Take the First Step towards Change—Be Aware

Happy and passionate people are a rarity these days. How many people do you know who enjoy what they are doing, who are reasonably satisfied with their lot, who do not regret their past choices, and look towards the future with the feeling of confidence? I call these people the “living ones among the walking dead.”

The opposite for courage is not cowardice, it is conformity. Even a dead fish can go with the flow.

—Jim Hightower

I believe that in order to tap the power of passion in our lives we need to understand the twin forces of inspiration and dissatisfaction. Deny the pull of inspiration and the push of dissatisfaction, and you have just slit the throat of a fulfilling career with your own hands.

Be aware and acknowledge the things and emotions that inspire you and leave you “in the zone,” so that you can embrace them when they appear, rather than let them fly away. Also, be aware and identify the work that is mental torture for you, a kind of drain on your psychic and physical energies, so that you can ignore it.

“Moaning and Groaning” Party

Most of the people dissatisfied with their professions will “moan and groan” about it at every possible opportunity. They never make an effort to discover the real cause of the pain, and even if they did, never make a real attempt to get rid of the cause forever.

Have you ever been to a bar, a lounge, a restaurant, or a hotel where the table next to you was occupied by a group of employees from some company having an office party, outing, or get together? Have you ever tried to listen to their conversation? You do not have to try to listen to them; they are usually so loud that

unless they are seated five tables away from you, you can hear them clearly without having to make an “eavesdropping” attempt.

They are out of office, but they are still talking about the office. The favourite topics might range from bad-mouthing or bitching about the unpopular manager, to the client who is a pain in the neck; from new policy which might take some of the employee freedom, to the cost-cutting measures newly implemented by the company that has cut down the frequency and quality of international travel.

The only thing that these people do not understand is that “moaning and groaning” about the condition will not change anything, and will only make their lives miserable. Yet they indulge in such “meaningless” behaviour instead of enjoying the food and the drinks sponsored by the company they are cursing about.

Do not sit like a loser and accept things the way they are. Work hard to change and keep on working till things actually change.

These sessions are not to be enjoyed but to be boycotted, since they give you a feeling of helplessness and focus on your inability to change your professional circumstances.

Let's Hit the Bar Tonight

Then there is another category of individuals who in order to free themselves from work-related stress indulge in unwinding sessions at the bar or discotheques every weekend. They feel that their week is not complete without the Friday “fun.” They may or may not indulge in the group bitching sessions but they always need a place and a couple of friends to hang out with, for their Friday drink parties.

I am not against alcohol consumption or disco nights, provided they are done in moderation. One should enjoy the drinks and the dance parties for their own sake, not because they serve as the balancing side of “messed up” professional aspirations. Getting high and getting wasted has become a normal trend at the bars, and

unfortunately this is done not just by the people who are unemployed, but by the people who are employed with reputed organizations. For five days they work in a profession that stresses them out completely and then they seek refuge in alcohol, drugs, etc.

This chapter is not a sermon on the evils of drinking, but I think it makes sense to analyse and check your “reasons for drinking.” Do not party as an escape highway or stress-busting exercise. Do not party because you are sad or depressed about something and want to vent out your frustrations, but party only because you are too happy or ecstatic about something. Identify the cause of the stress and kill it permanently, rather than trying to assuage it temporarily. This can only happen when you make the journey from “denial and escape” to “awareness and acknowledgement” mode of consciousness. Once you have done that, you are now ready to handle the next demon in the way of your passion, called....

One reason that I don't drink is that I want to know when I am having a good time.

—Lady Astor

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- You cannot escape from a prison unless you know you are in one.
- Promotions and pay hikes are “moving goalposts.”
- Do not sit like a loser and accept things the way they are. Work hard to change and keep on working till things actually change.

Self-Awareness

- What are some of the things and pursuits you have been denying yourself?

- Are you honest to others and more importantly to yourself, when it comes to loving your present occupation? Did you feel offended because of this question?
- Have you accepted mediocrity as a way of life—personally or professionally?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

Scarcity Mentality

You are never given a wish without also being given the power to make it come true. You may have to work for it, however.

—RICHARD BACH

You Need Only “You” for Success

Whenever I conduct entrepreneurship boot camps, there are two assignments that I always make my participants undergo. First, I ask them to write down all the resources they need, or the perfect conditions for pursuing their passion professionally. More often than not, all the participants manage to come up with four or five things, or conditions, that they consider necessary for launching their dream career. The points listed by them vary depending upon on whether they want to do a business or a job in the field related to their passion. For businesses, the list looks somewhat like this:

1. Need to get a business idea related to my passion.
2. Need to prepare a business model.
3. Need a decent amount of capital—fixed and working.
4. Need the right people.
5. Need regular clients and new business.

For those seeking a secure, regular income by doing a job they love, the list looks like:

1. Need to identify four or five companies that offer the job profile I would love.
2. Need the formal education related to that particular job profile.
3. Need colleagues to guide me during the initial months.
4. Need enough savings to pay the bills before I get salary from my dream job.

What They Really Need

My experience in coaching and mentoring thousands of people tells me that while the things on the “I would need” list are important, and given a choice between having and not having them I would always prefer to have them. However, they are not the most crucial factors for pursuing one’s passion successfully. The most important and the only indispensable factor is “self-belief”; people who have it are resourceful enough to source anything that is present on their “need list.”

Resources are never a problem, and it always boils down to “resourcefulness” of the individual. Self-belief is the ultimate and only resource that is truly needed for living a life filled with passion and success. You may succeed if others do not believe in you, but you will never succeed if you do not believe in yourself.

Meet the Millionaire

As part of the second assignment, I ask them to use their imagination even more, when I tell them to write a paragraph about the physical appearance and the personality of the person who

- has addressed more than one million people till date through his talks;

- is 29 years of age (in 2012);
- speaks at forums like the World Economic Forum, Davos;
- invests in real estate, future options, and stocks;
- has started hospitals and built schools in underdeveloped countries;
- plays soccer, and loves to swim and surf;
- is an author of an international bestselling book; and
- has a million-dollar business empire.

You can also do this exercise of writing down a short description of the individual who has achieved so much at such a young age.

The phrases that I get to hear from the audience are varied—scion of a wealthy business family driving a Bentley or a Lamborghini; tall, handsome guy wearing tuxedo; a professional speaker; hedge-fund manager; real estate tycoon; philanthropist; a research scholar; and so on.

Meet the Person—Nick Vujicic

The audience gets the shock of their life when they get to know that the person whose accomplishments we just discussed is Nick Vujicic, Director of Life without Limbs.

Born in 1982 in Brisbane, Australia, without any medical explanation or warning, Nicholas Vujicic came into the world with neither arms nor legs. Imagine the shock his parents felt when they saw their first-born baby boy for the first time, only to find that he was what the world would consider imperfect and abnormal. What could he ever do or become when living with such a massive disability? Little did anyone know that this beautiful limbless baby would one day be someone who would inspire and motivate people from all walks of life.

Every year Nick shares his inspiring story with millions of people and has been interviewed on various televised programmes worldwide.

If God can use a man without arms and legs to be His hands and feet, then He will certainly use any willing heart.

—Nick Vujicic

Do You Still Think You Do Not Have Enough?

The world is full of stories of people who, like Nick, grew up without any resources or encouragement but nonetheless believed that success was possible. Some of them are celebrities, but there are many people whose stories are less well known, but not less acknowledged.

I can bet on this fact that there is a person in your family or amongst your friends who, despite the lack of resources, achieved considerable success in his or her life. They may not be a household name but they surely have a name in your household. What they all have in common is that they made a decision at some point to take charge of their lives—and fulfil their dreams.

Information and Ideas—The Only Capital Needed in the 21st Century

Prior to year 1850, if you were asked who could be considered to be the most powerful people in this world, you would have answered “the kings and the emperors.” The power and ability to succeed was determined by the number of people one had in their army or war force.

Post-1850, the world witnessed the rise of the Industrial Age. The most powerful people in this world were the people who had the capital to invest in heavy machinery, equipment, and assembly lines, and those who employed a huge workforce. The world witnessed the rise of giant corporations like Ford, General Electric, General Motors, US Steel, and Standard Oil. Financial powerhouses and institutions also flourished during this period to facilitate trade and economy. Business became much more organized and a new breed of successful capitalists started controlling the way

business was done. Power-shift was a normal phenomenon as the kings and the royal families were no longer the sole owners of the businesses around the world. The masses, rather than working for the kings, were now employed at various factories owned by the capitalists of the age.

Post-1970, the Information Age arrived, also commonly known as the Computer Age or the Digital Age. The information age is an idea that the current era would be characterized by the ability of individuals to transfer information freely, and to have instant access to information that would have been difficult or impossible to find previously. The idea is linked to the concept of a digital revolution, and carries the ramifications of a shift from traditional industry that the industrial revolution brought through industrialization, to an economy based on the manipulation of information, that is, an information society.

Information age is also the “global communication age” especially since the advent of the Internet, cell phones, and emails. It is possible to send information across the globe in a fraction of a second, and in the words of the famous journalist Thomas Friedman, the world is getting flat. Information age has completely changed the way business and trade are carried out in the world.

It is said that the amount of information available in this world doubles every three years, and the most powerful people in today’s world are the people who have access to the information and are willing to act on it faster than anybody else. The world of business has changed more during the past 20 years, than during the entire history of human civilization.

It is now possible to start a billion-dollar organization from a garage or a living room, with little or no capital. The only resources you now need are “access to quality information” and “ability to weave a business model” around that information.

The world’s richest people are the people who started with the capital called “ideas.”

Each new hour holds new chances, for new beginnings. The horizons move forward, offering you space to place new steps of change.

—Maya Angelou

They All Started Small—The Important Thing Is to Start

Apple

Apple was started in a garage by two young men named Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs, who had this idea to create a personal computer.

Microsoft

The idea that would spawn Microsoft germinated when Paul Allen showed Bill Gates the 1 January 1975 issue of *Popular Electronics* that demonstrated the Altair 8800. Bill Gates is now one of the richest people in the world.

Facebook

Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates and fellow students at Harvard.

eBay

eBay founder Pierre Omidyar finished the code for the website in the living room of his Silicon Valley home.

Virgin Atlantic

Virgin's founder Richard Branson dropped out of school to start his first business venture—a magazine called *Student*—at the age of 16.

Walmart

Sam Walton, founder of Walmart, made his first shot in 1945 at a variety store in Arkansas, with a loan from his father-in-law and money he had saved during his time in the Army.

Burger King

The company began in 1954 when James McLamore and David Edgerton opened a Burger King restaurant in Miami, Florida.

FedEx

It began operations on 17 April 1973 as Federal Express, a nod to the Federal Reserve, with who the founder Frederick W. Smith had hoped to get a contract.

HP

Hewlett Packard was inauspiciously born in a Palo Alto garage with a mere \$538 investment.

Dell

While attending the University of Texas in 1984, Michael Dell founded the company as PCs Limited. Initial operations of Dell's company ran from Dell's dorm room.

Some Successful Indian Companies That Started Small

Reliance Industries

After working in Aden and Dubai for some time, Dhirubhai Ambani returned to India in 1958 with ₹50,000 in his pocket.

Infosys

The idea of Infosys was born on a morning in January 1981 when N. R. Narayana Murthy and six software engineers sat together in his apartment debating how they could create a company to write software codes. Murthy borrowed approximately ₹10,000 from his wife Sudha to start the company.

Bharti Group

A first-generation entrepreneur, Sunil Mittal started his first business in April 1976 at the age of 18, with a capital investment of INR 20,000 borrowed from his father.

HCL

Shiv Nadar and his five colleagues quit DCM in the summer of 1976. They decided to set up a company that would make personal computers.

Flipkart

Flipkart was founded in 2007 by Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal with a capital of ₹400,000, both alumni of the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

If You Are Resourceful...

The success of these companies proves that all you need for success is a dream and willingness take massive action on that dream. I am using the words “dream” and “passion” interchangeably because for me they mean one and the same thing. We dream only about the things that we are passionate about, and the goals that provide us with the emotional spark to take action towards their

realization. The word resourcefulness for me means the “ability to source and optimally use the resources needed for accomplishing your passion.”

The world is full of people who had all the resources at their disposal, but who failed to use them in the most appropriate manner. On the other hand, *for a “resourceful” individual:*

Getting the right business idea is never a problem.

Raising capital is never a problem.

Getting the right people is never a problem.

Cracking the interview of the dream job is not a problem.

Acquiring knowledge is never a problem.

Getting clients is never a problem.

Facing the challenges is never a problem.

Getting mentors and building right connections are not problems.

Because resourcefulness is the ultimate resource you would need to pursue your passion.

The “Three Step” Strategy Followed by All Resourceful Human Beings

Step One: First Things First

Think about it. What are the things or resources you think you need to live your passion? Write them down on a piece of paper. Then categorize the list into dispensable or indispensable resources by asking the question, “Is it really important for my passion?” or “Is it my thinking that makes me believe that it is indispensable for my passion.” You will realize that 80 per cent of the items in your list are dispensable and only 20 per cent of them are crucial or indispensable factors.

Step Two: Handle the Indispensable Resources First

The next step involves asking yourself the question “What are the two or three ways in which I can source, arrange, get, or learn the

indispensable things on my list?” And you should keep on asking till the time you get the answer. All your thinking time, energy, and physical efforts should first be involved in sourcing the important things.

Step Three: Think about the Desirable Factors As Well

If after sourcing the indispensable resources you still have some time left, you can invest it for getting the sources that you feel will make things convenient for you. “What are the two or three ways in which I can source, arrange, get, or learn the dispensable things on my list?” Once you have the answer to this question, it is important to act on it.

This three-step approach, no matter how simple it sounds, is very helpful on two fronts when it comes to your success. First, it empowers you to move towards the direction of your goals by focusing only on the things that matter the most. In the absence of this approach you might feel overwhelmed by the burden of the resources you think you need. Second, it serves as a reminder “to keep the main thing as the main thing.” You would clearly know what the key success factors are rather than wasting them by focusing on things low on priority. Remember you were sent on this planet to live a life of abundance, not of limitations. Once you handle the scarcity mentality, you are now ready to delete the last incompatibility of...

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- Resources are never a problem, and it always boils down to “resourcefulness” of the individual.
- Self-belief is the ultimate and only resource that is truly needed for living a life filled with passion and success.

- Passion and commercial success are not mutually exclusive to each other. You do not have to choose one.

Self-Awareness

- What are the things or resources you think you need to live your passion?
- Find out the names of at least five people who got results you desire, even without the resources you mentioned?
- How much do you believe in yourself, when it comes to living your passion?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

10

Fear

Expose yourself to your deepest fear; after that, fear has no power, and the fear of freedom shrinks and vanishes. You are free.

—JIM MORRISON

Face It Once or Get Kicked Every Day

When I was in the third standard of my school, I was one student who just focused on academics and never participated in any extracurricular activity or sports. I weighed only 50 pounds and the only physical activity that I did daily was a 500 m long walk from my classroom to the school gate. I hated it because on the way Rahul, a student in the fourth standard would always rough me up. Now it's not that he was the *bully* of our school, or a very strong guy. In fact, he was a few inches shorter than me and weighed the same. What prevented me from getting even with him was a 20-pound bag in my one hand, containing my various school books. I was taught by my parents to always respect books and to never put them on ground. In fact, the lesson of “respecting the books” was so much embedded in my psychology that whenever I accidentally touched the books with my foot, I used to seek forgiveness by touching the same book thrice to my

forehead (most Indians do it). Now, please do not misunderstand me because I am not suggesting that we should not respect our books or kick them intentionally.

Whenever I walked back to my school van, Rahul would come from somewhere and push me or kick me in the shins, and then would quickly run away. It did not hurt a lot physically but I must admit that I was a mental wreck because of these humiliating assaults by a kid who was four inches shorter than me. Many a times I tried to hit him with my bag but he was too fast for me, because of the “things” I was carrying. I knew I could never catch him by carrying my 20-pound bag full of books.

I told my mom about it. But she said that I should not indulge in any kind of fight at school and asked me to cover my dreaded 500 m with someone else. She was sure that Rahul would be able to bully me when I was alone, but that was not true. She also said that she would complain about Rahul to the class teacher at the next open house, but the meeting was a few months away and I was already tired of those humiliating assaults.

One fine day, I was walking back to my school van with one of my friends. Rahul came and slapped me on my head and then started to run away, teasing me with his stupid gestures. I tried to chase him but soon gave up realizing that I could never catch him with the luggage I was carrying. Suddenly I heard the words, “*Drop the bag and get him Sid!*” I looked around and saw my class teacher Mrs Rathore. I do not know whether it was for her words or for the feeling of revenge, I dropped my bag and bottle and chased him. After running for around 300 m, I caught him and gave him a good beating. He learned a good lesson that day and never troubled me again, but I think it was me who learnt the bigger lesson that day, “Sometimes we need to throw our books, existing knowledge, our baggage, etc to free ourselves to face the people who have been kicking us around and exploiting us. Sometimes we need to throw what we are carrying, if it is keeping us away from living a life of dreams and according to our potential.”

I Let Fear Delay My Plans by Four Years

Accept it or not, most of us have been guilty of sacrificing our dreams, aspirations, and passions at the altar of fear. In scenarios where we did not let fear stop us, we surely let it delay our plans by a few days or months, and in some cases, years. Right from the age of 15 when I picked up and read my first personal development book *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill, I had my epiphany. I knew what I wanted to do with my career—to help and serve other people in reaching their goals. Thereafter, I continued my research, studying thousands of books and hundreds of training programmes which further strengthened my resolve about my passion.

When I finished my graduation, instead of going after my passion and making a career in the area of personal development, I chose a job with a management consulting firm. I was too afraid to launch myself in the personal development industry. Some of the best personal development experts in this world are school dropouts and here I was, a college graduate, not feeling confident enough to follow my passion.

It is amazing how good we are at justifying our fears, inadequacies, and self-doubts, under the wraps of strategy. Every day I went to work in the hope to find a correlation between what was my profession and my true calling, but I could not find any. Yes, my work involved serving a few clients but there was no way I could get to know how crucial my contribution was in their success. It was like shooting in the dark. Have you ever tried throwing darts at the board in a dark room? I was throwing a handful of darts in the dark, every day, and not sure if I was even hitting the board. And even if I did hit the board, I had no idea which dart hit the board. You get feedback once a year about your “hits” and “misses,” and the net of two determines your next year’s hike and current year’s bonus.

I do not have any regrets about my past and I am happy that I finally took the decision to go after my dreams full throttle. Even though it took me four years, I am glad that I did not wait for another 10, 20, 30, or 40 years to follow my heart. I view those four years of my life as a learning experience and I credit most of the insights I have about employee psychology and management's behaviour to it.

After my first promotion, I realized that promotions, titles, and fancy designations of the corporate world are not the destinations where you feel fulfilled; they are merely the gate-pass to the next title and promotion. Some do not get it within their present organization; so they move to another one. *I really pity the employees who complain that their company is exploiting them. Let me tell you that it is your own fear to test your wings that allows you to be exploited in the market place.*

Think about it. Are you sticking to your present profession just because you are afraid of something? Are you unsure about yourself?

People are unhappy day-to-day, but if you ask them if they're satisfied, they'll say yes. It's a rationalization process to convince yourself that you made the right decision.

—Scott Adams, creator of Dilbert

Consequences of Fear—A Life of Boundaries

Living with our fears over a long period of time, adversely affects our self-image and confidence. We lose faith in our abilities every time we surrender to the things we fear. When fear takes a stronghold in your life, your actions are oriented towards accommodating and adjusting to the fears, not in winning over them. A fearful lifestyle restricts enterprise and ability to take initiative. Fear short-circuits the mind and clips the wings of imagination. A person operating under the influence of fear has very limited choices available to him.

When it comes to following your passion, fear will magnify the problems and minimize the rewards associated with it. This is the major reason why people continue to suffer in their existing professions rather than make a sincere attempt towards realizing their passion.

- You would turn a blind eye to professional, social, or financial opportunities, despite their overwhelming benefits. A mind filled with fear is a very poor evaluator.
- You would be afraid of meeting new people and entertaining new ideas related to your career.
- Your fear will stop you from stepping up to the task, and deliver a life-changing opportunity, keeping you forever in your comfort zone.

Get into the Pool, But Do Not Dive into It

Following one's passion is like learning how to swim. The only way you can learn swimming is by getting into the water, not by sitting at the side of the pool in a comfortable chair and sipping a drink. When I tell this to a few people, they give the excuse of observing other swimmers, and I tell them just two things:

- You can always observe other swimmers more closely by being inside the pool.
- You would be able to practise what you observe, only when you are inside the pool.

And by getting into the pool, I do not ask you to enter the deep side of the pool or head-dive into it. Start from the shallow end of the pool, where you cannot possibly drown, and then learn your way to reach the deep side of the pool. Similarly, if you are afraid of public speaking, do not sign up for a speech at the “National Speaker’s Annual Convention”; rather try delivering short speeches in the presence of your near and dear ones.

Afraid of Pursuing Your Passion?

If you are one of the people who feel scared to death when it comes to living your passion and making a living out of it, chances are high that you suffer from one or more of the following:

Fear of Authority

As children, we grow up listening to and modelling ourselves upon the members of our family, especially parents and elder siblings. They help us in taking some crucial decisions of our lives—like choosing the college, and courses to be pursued. It is perfectly fine to respect the elders but what we forget is that respect does not mean blind reverence to their words. As Wayne Dyer said, effective parenting is not about making leaning necessary; it is about making leaning unnecessary. Most of the Indian children suffer from what I call “Fear of Authority” and they are always trying to please their parents and elders at the cost of their personal ambition. Recently I met a brilliant software engineer who is an excellent base guitarist as well, and the fear of authority was evident in his words when he told me—*“My dad would either kill me or commit suicide if I tell him that I want to quit my job to start my own music band.”*

I can share my own personal example although it feels embarrassing to admit, but it took me an entire one month only to plan how to tell (read shock) my parents that I was quitting my job with one of the most respected companies in the world, to start my own venture.

Solution

Your parents love you unconditionally and they always want you to succeed. You would realize this eternal truth once you become a parent. Never feel afraid to communicate your plans with them. Yes, they might get angry for some of your decisions, but behind

that anger lies concern for you. How much your parents believe in your dream is directly linked to how much faith you have in it.

I admit that there would be a few cases where parents do get irrational and overemotional about the career decisions of their children, but in such cases you need to make a choice—either make an effort to live a fulfilling life, or suffer for the rest of your life in the dungeon of authority. I believe that there is just one authority you must listen to—your own conscience.

Convince or get convinced.

—Anonymous

Self-experienced or Self-induced Fear

All fears, except fear of loud noises and fear of falling, are “acquired emotions.” All of us acquired our fears as a result of personal experiences and “what we heard” from others. Three points are to be noted in this regard:

First, if something does not work the first time, human beings are afraid to attempt the same thing again in future, since the same is classified as a fearful activity in their minds for future references. *For example, if your first business venture did not work as per your expectations, you would be afraid to start a new one in future. Even if the circumstances are different and you have more resources, you would be fearful about starting any venture again.*

Second, if we have personally not tried anything we automatically categorize it as a fearful activity, based upon whatever information we have about it—anything we read, watched, or heard from someone. This makes no sense, yet this is how the human brain works. *For example, if you have no prior personal memories of a business fiasco, when given an opportunity to start one you would look for references or any information already deposited in your mind through newspapers, books, television, and conversations. Hence, if you have seen a business failing in your family or friends’ circle, or if you have read the*

discouraging statistics about business survival rates, you would fear starting a new venture.

Third, even if we have no prior bad experience, or no stored information, the first natural reaction to any new activity or information is that of caution and fear. You would prefer to continue with your present way of living rather than trying the unknown. *For example, even if you have no failed ventures or any negative references for entrepreneurship, just because you are presently working in a safe and secure job, you would not leave it to start something you have no information about. This is true even if you are struggling in your existing profession, since human beings prefer a known devil over a stranger. Status quo is embedded in the core of the human DNA.*

Solution

Awareness, knowledge, and persistence are the only known antidotes for experienced and self-induced fears. Talk to yourself that past failures are past now, and they occurred in your life for a purpose. You are now wiser and armed with better insights about how to succeed in future. You need to communicate clearly that what happened with others will not necessarily happen with you. Be a student of successful people so that you can do what they do; also study the people who failed so that you can avoid what they did. One of my mentors gave me a thumb rule to deal with any kind of fear—*“Do not fear anything you have not tried personally. Do not fear anything that you have failed at unless you have tried it 50 times. By your 50th attempt, you would know what it takes to win over that fear.”*

Social Fear

Human beings are social creatures, and this is the reason why many of us are seeking social approval, trying to meet social benchmarks, and abiding by community rules and standards. Do note that I am not referring to the laws and regulations, since laws and regulations

are indispensable for the sound working of any community or social structure. We should all abide by the laws and honour our duties as citizens of a country. What I am talking about are the benchmarks or deadlines that people strive for so that they do not appear outcast.

“You should start earning immediately after your studies.”

“You should be done with your master’s degree by 25.”

“You should have a car before you turn 25.”

“You should buy a house before you turn 30.”

These “you-shoulds” are the biggest enemy of human enterprise and creativity. They short-circuit the human mind with emotions of fear and greed, which result in desperate professional decisions.

Solution

Make sure that your life is a product of your own conclusion and not a warehouse of random thoughtless opinions given by others. Question the obvious and you will see how shallow some of society’s benchmarks are. Do not follow the advice of average people unless that is something you want to become. It is obvious that you have no intention of living an average life, else you would not have picked up this book.

If you feel bogged down by social benchmarks or the unnecessary need of keeping up with the Joneses, remember the 18/40/60 rule given by Dr Daniel Amen. We fear about what people think of us all the time because we think they are always watching us. When you’re 18, you worry about what everybody is thinking of you; when you’re 40, you don’t give a darn what anybody thinks of you; when you’re 60, you realize nobody has been thinking about you at all. There is no need for you to wait till you are 60 to understand the truth behind this rule.

Happiness comes when you give up the burden of social image and start focusing on the self-image.

When you do not need a new car to prove how successful you are.

*When you do not need that big house to prove how rich you are.
When you become bigger than the brands you use in life—Rolex or
Hermes.*

Strive to reach a place where you shall be judged by the wealth of your passion rather than the thickness of your wallet.

Face the Fear or Keep Fearing

Think about it.

You are in your existing profession *because you fear* you cannot get anything better.

You are not starting that business *because you fear* that it might not work.

You are still waiting *because you fear* that it is not the right time.

You will never be able to follow your dream *because you fear* you do not have what it takes.

And because you fear, you will fail even before you test your grit and determination. Fear is an emotion that is always whispering in our ears, “No matter how hard you try, it will not change your circumstance. Hence, no sense in trying.” However, we have enough evidence to conclude that it is only by facing our fears, and acting despite our fears, that we get the results.

Chances are that all this fear conditioning will take place without you consciously doing all this. Once fear is ingrained in our minds as a deep-rooted emotion, we start considering the self-imposed limitations as our natural or real limitations. We may not even be aware of the things we fear, and it is only by studying our behaviour under different situations that we will get to identify our fears. If you ask anyone whether they are afraid of living their passion in life, they would give a straight “No” as the answer, even if they are at present in a profession that kills their soul and is a big drain on their energy.

No matter whether we are aware of it or not, our fears limit our true potential and determine our possibility field.

Human beings are born with only two kinds of fear—fear of falling and fear of loud noises, and all other fears are acquired emotions. Fear is an important emotion for physical survival, but it is a very hindering emotion for personal and professional growth. It is really important that you feel fearful holding poisonous snakes or spiders in your hand, but it is also important that you stop fearing public speaking, poverty, failure, rejection, or any other acquired kind of fear.

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- No matter whether we are aware of it or not, our fears limit our true potential and determine our possibility field.
- The only known antidote to failure is action.
- Living with one's fears over a long period of time, adversely affects our self-image and confidence. We lose faith in our abilities every time we surrender to the things we fear.

Awareness

- What are your five biggest fears related to your passion? Are they realistic?
- What would happen to your life if you were no longer afraid?
- Think about all the things you are afraid of. Are you taking enough action to kill those fears?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

Section Two:

Installing Passion into Profession Program

Congratulations!

You have reached a milestone in your life. If you paid attention to what was shared during the earlier chapters and did all the exercises diligently, your mind is now free from the viruses of excuses, luck, ignorance, scarcity, and fear that kill most of the professional and personal dreams. However, it is important that you just do not leave it without installing a positive, self-sustaining, automatic mechanism. After the removal of these incompatible files, you are now ready to load the Passion into Profession program in your magnificent brain.

How much money you make in your passion, is a result. Hence if you want to change your results, you need to change the operating system, that is, the knowledge system.

Your New Operating Software—Passion into Profession

Just like any other software program, there are certain program files associated with it. If you have installed any software in your computer you know that there are certain support files that maximize the performance of the installed program, and hence the performance of the computer. Hence it is recommended that you give a thorough reading to these files or principles to get the most out of your knowledge system. The program comprises 12 universal principles, which are indispensable to achieve success in your

passion—be it your dream business or a job in any industry that fascinates you. They have the power to alter your existing knowledge system forever and put you on the fast track of personal and professional achievements.

A Word of Caution and a Promise

As you continue the journey, there is something I would like to caution you about—“Do not let the simplicity of the principles mentioned in the forthcoming pages, fool you to think that they are too simple to be true. These principles have been leveraged by millions of successful people in this world either through conscious endeavour or subconscious behaviour.”

I have implemented these principles in my own life and the results have been amazing. Now my mission is to share these “magical principles” with millions of people who deserve to live a fulfilling life, but settle for a frustrating existence. These principles once understood and implemented will skyrocket your professional success. You will realize that these principles should be used by anyone who is seeking success—personal or professional.

1. The Navigation Principle
2. The Happiness Principle
3. The Work–Happiness Principle
4. The Potential Principle
5. The Knowledge Principle
6. The Association Principle
7. The Skills Mastery Principle
8. The Internal Communication Principle
9. The Failure Principle
10. The Money Principle
11. The Productivity Principle
12. The Ownership Principle

I learned that there are a series of universal principles and timeless truths that explain much of human success and failure. These principles explain happiness and unhappiness, wealth and poverty, health and ill health, and good and poor relationships. These mental laws explain why some people live the life of their dreams, while others just manage to get by. Leverage these laws and you will find yourself swept by the tides of success. You can also ignore these timeless principles but do so only at your own peril.

The Navigation Principle

The Navigation Principle states that you can never drift and find your way to success. You first identify your destination and then continuously navigate your way towards it, incorporating the mid-course corrections.

The Greatest Navigator

John Goddard was 15, when a friend of his dad's came to visit their house and told his father that he regretted not doing all the things he wanted to when he was John's age. John, struck by the comment, got out a yellow legal pad and scribbled out 127 things he wanted to do before he died. The list John came up with was impressive and audacious, and the results have been truly incredible.

Out of the 127 goals John wrote for himself, he has managed to accomplish 109 of them. In addition to these goals, he also accomplished 500 other goals that he set for himself during the course of pursuing his Life List.

If you are underestimating the goals set by a teenager, let me share some of the goals accomplished by John Goddard.

- First man in history to explore the Nile River in its entirety.

- Scaled the five tallest peaks in the world, except Mount Everest, which is still on his list.
- Explored the Amazon, the Congo, the Colorado, and the Yangtze Rivers from the beginning till end.
- Visited more than 150 countries in the world.
- Travelled through the Grand Canyon on foot and by boat.
- Circumnavigated the globe four times.

These were not simple or easy goals. Goddard is one of America's leading motivational speakers, an author of two books, and has been honoured by the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce.

To dare is to do; to fear is to fail.

—John Goddard

Your Goals Might Be Different, but the Navigation Principle Always Works

Your goals might not be like those of John Goddard. You might not be dreaming about travelling the world, flying aircraft, climbing the tallest mountains, or exploring rivers, but you are always dreaming about reaching your destination, making your professional life soar like the best aircraft in the world, having peak experiences in your life akin to climbing mountains, and exploring your true potential.

The great news is that the Navigation Principle that served John Goddard in accomplishing his Life List, is the same principle that we all can use to accomplish everything on our Love List. It is time you get serious about your Love List items.

The Power of Written-down Goals

There is magic and power in written-down goals. When you write your goals down on a piece of paper you create a literal space between you and the goals, and you can objectively analyse the

best strategy to accomplish the goals. Human beings are goal-seeking organisms and if they do not set worthwhile goals for themselves, they pursue absolutely anything that comes their way.

Six Steps to Activate Your Navigation System

According to the Navigation Principle, we all have our inbuilt navigation mechanism placed inside our brains. Whether we use it optimally to pursue our passion is a matter of choice and proactiveness. You can use it optimally with the help of the following six steps:

Step One: Identify Your Passion or Goals

You have already taken the first step by preparing your Love List and writing down all the possible professions associated with the things mentioned on your list. It is also advisable to set a tentative deadline, as to when exactly you plan to get involved into them, part-time or full-time. A goal without a deadline often becomes prey to the devil called procrastination. Just like a captain of the ship does not start the journey into the ocean without identifying the destination port, you too should not sail through your life without identifying your destination.

Step Two: Identify the Best Strategy

Based upon the estimated deadline set, and the passion you are chasing, you choose the best strategy to accomplish the desired goal. A ship captain can complete a journey that normally takes 10 days, in eight days by increasing the propeller's speed and choosing the shortest course. Similarly he can finish the same 10-day journey in 20 days or two months, by choosing the longest possible route and making the ship move at a really slow speed. Of course, when it comes to living your passions, you must choose the best and the quickest route to accomplish your mission.

Step Three: Take Action

The captain cannot expect the ship to cruise automatically towards its destination just because he figured out the best route for the journey. It has to leave the shore and hit the deep seas. As they say, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The best strategy in the world becomes the worst strategy in the world if you sit on it for too long. Write down 5–10 things or activities you would do every day to realize your passion, and take action.

Step Four: Review and Monitor Progress

You would have to constantly monitor the efficacy of the strategy chosen towards the realization of your passion. What may be the best strategy to start with may not be the best strategy in the middle of your journey. If your plan of action is not producing the desired results you need to look for alternative ways to get to your goal.

A few questions that can help you:

- Is my progress as per my expectations?
- Is there a better strategy to follow?
- How can I constantly improve the quality of my actions, and the results that I am producing?

It is also advisable that you seek expert advice on the matter. Good advice can save you years of wasted effort and expedite your journey manifold. Your earning potential is directly linked with your learning appetite.

Step Five: Take Corrective Measures

You do not change your decision to reach your destination; you might have to change the direction. The captain of the ship takes what can be called as mid-course correction, based upon the tidal winds encountered, harsh weather, or sea-storm. A calm sea never

makes a skilful mariner, and a skilful mariner knows when and how to adjust the sails. Similarly, based upon the progress review done at specific intervals and the conclusions found, you should change your strategy.

Step Six: Persist

Imagine the ship's captain deciding to abandon the plan of taking the ship to the destination. Unless the ship's machinery needs some rest, refuelling, or repair work, the captain never anchors it at any port other than the destination port. Similarly, you do not abandon your passion and settle for any other profession. You might have to stop and rest for a short while, but in the long run you never give up. If you persist till you succeed, you will live a life full of passion and fulfilment.

Do not hope your way to passion; navigate your way to it.

It is very interesting to study the behaviour of people and draw distinctions from it.

People do not play a game of football without goalposts to score goals, yet the same people play the game of life every day without any real goals.

People do not go out on a hiking trip without a compass, *yet the same people start on the journey of their life without any sense of direction.*

If people know where they want to go for vacation they do not rely on hope to figure out a way to get to that place, *yet the same people just hope to figure out a way to live an inspired life.*

The Navigation Principle serves as a goalpost, a game plan, a compass, and a strategy to live a life filled with passion, fulfilment, and vigour. All of us would arrive at some place after some years, but the bigger question is would we be happy to arrive there. Most of the people, after spending 20–30 years in a particular career, realize that they have been chasing the wrong dream. This happens because they never leveraged the Navigation Principle, which all human beings can use by developing awareness around it.

Money-Back Guarantee

Personal power gravitates to people who leverage the Navigation Principle—which basically involves setting goals, identifying the best strategy, monitoring progress, taking corrective measures, and repeating the same cycle till you reach your destination.

I completely believe in the power of this principle and use it on a day-to-day basis to help my workshop participants and coaching clients. In fact, I believe so much in the efficacy of this principle that I promise to give a money-back guarantee if it does not work for them, provided they follow my one-hour challenge for one year. I even give them 60 days off on this assignment, that is, they just need to do the assignment on any 300 days in a year.

Now some of you might be thinking that one year is too long a time. Let me tell you that time would pass anyway, and only you can decide if you want to live your passion. You can choose to follow the challenge for one year, or reject it and continue to live your lifeless existence.

And for God's sake do not give lame excuses like I do not have a pen, notebook, or an MS Word document to type this, since it will only deepen my conviction that the majority of the people prefer "lame excuses" over their "passion."

Morning Exercise (10 minutes)

- Every morning when you get up, write down the dream job or business you want to get into, and how you would feel when you are into one.
- Write down how your daily schedule would look like, if you were actually in your dream profession.

Evening Exercise (40 minutes)

- Write down the names of five people who are already doing what you want to do and a paragraph about how they started.

- Write down the skills you need to get into your dream profession.
- Read for 30 minutes every day either about your role models or any relevant information related to your passion.

Night Exercise (10 minutes)

- Write down five things you did today to get close to your dream job or business.
- Write down three mistakes you should not repeat the next day based upon the learning you had today.

I do this exercise daily and it has done wonders for my professional and personal lives. The impact has been great for thousands of our coaching clients and workshop participants.

The unexamined life is not worth living.

—Socrates

Why and How Does It Work?

Every time you write a goal down on a piece of paper, you are emotionalizing and conditioning your brain. You give it a conscious command to acquire all the knowledge and to spot any opportunity that could help you in its fulfilment.

There is a part in your brain called the reticular activation system (RAS) and its function is to determine what you will pay attention to. Once emotionalized with your goals, your brain would never miss an opportunity, information, or news related to your vision. When you write your goals down, you not only programme your conscious mind but you also activate the subconscious mind to produce events and opportunities in line with your deepest desires. People—friends and strangers—would show up with some important information, and help would start pouring in from unexpected corners to make your dreams a reality. What people call lucky

coincidences are actually the RAS mechanism of an emotionalized brain at work.

And all that it takes to leverage this giant force within you is to write down your passion, vision, mission, and dreams, and monitor them every day.

When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bonds. Your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great, and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties, and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamt yourself to be.

—Patanjali

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- You cannot hit a target you do not have.
- Once emotionalized with your goals, your brain would never miss an opportunity, information, or news related to your vision.
- When you write your goals down you not only programme your conscious mind but you also activate the subconscious mind to produce events and opportunities in line with your deepest desires.

Self-Awareness

- What are your five short-term and long-term professional goals?
- How can you make sure that you read your goals every day?
- What is your action strategy to realize your goals? Write it down.

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

The Happiness Principle

The Happiness Principle states that there are four critical determinants of happiness—finances, health, relationships, and growth (in all the three areas). And unless we strive for all four of them to be present in our life, happiness will elude us. It is our prime responsibility to design our life in such a way to incorporate action towards these four critical areas of happiness.

“Siddhartha, you know what? I feel poor most of the times. The truth is I felt richer during my early days of business, than I feel today.” I must admit, I almost fell off my chair on hearing this confession from one of my coaching clients. This comment was the last thing on earth I expected from this client of mine. Yes, he was facing some employee retention challenges that brought him to me, but money was surely not an issue. After all his organization was one of the largest exporters of clothes in the country, with revenues of more than \$100 million.

“Why do you say so? You can buy anything you want and when you want it,” I could not resist but question him more on this intriguing confession.

“No Siddhartha, that is not true. In fact, money is one of the worst ways to judge one’s feeling of wealth because there is no end to it,” he answered in a tone full of melancholy.

“Yeah, easy to say when you have a few million dollars stashed in your bank accounts,” I thought to myself.

“See, it is simple to understand. As my wealth increases, my network of people also changes along with it. You will never see a billionaire partying with a multimillionaire, or a multimillionaire partying with a millionaire, or a millionaire spending time with people who only make a few thousands per year.” It was at that moment that our chords began to strike at the same pitch. I started understanding him. “Real wealth is about feeling wealthy, and I have not experienced that feeling for a long time now. The people around me are as wealthy as I am and a lot of them are way wealthier than I am. So when I am with them, I experience no sense of uniqueness. On the contrary I feel poor.”

“Hence the only advice that I can give you is to follow your uniqueness. Earn as much as you can but do so only by following your true calling. Remember, billionaires are not impressed by money; they get impressed by your uniqueness, passion, and determination.”

This certainly was one of the coaching sessions where I learnt the most. I was about to thank him for sharing his valuable insights through this candid conversation, when I heard his words “Let’s get back to our discussion, you are charging me a fortune.” I simply smiled and we were back to the business of discussing employee retention strategies.

Money does not make us feel wealthy, although by the time this truth dawns upon us, we would have already spent a major portion of our lives chasing it.

Well, this true story is certainly not directed towards undermining the importance of money in our lives. I would be the last person on earth to tell you that money is not important, and anybody who says money is not important has obviously not been without it for too long. The thing that I am implying through the story is that “money is not the sole determinant of happiness” in our lives. The world is full of billionaires who know a lot about the subject

of money, but they know little or nothing about the topic called “happiness.”

Can Any Business Loss Be Bigger Than the Loss of Human Life?

On 5 January 2009, a 74-year-old man’s body was found on the railway tracks at Blaubeuren in southern Germany. On further investigation, it turned out that the German billionaire Adolf Merckle had committed suicide after his business empire ran into trouble in the global economic slowdown. Officials also said that there was no evidence that anyone else was to blame. Merckle ran up losses due to wrong-way bets on an automobile company shares.

His family, which had reported him missing after he failed to return home, said in a statement, “The distress to his firms caused by the financial crisis and the related uncertainties of recent weeks, along with the helplessness of no longer being able to act, broke the passionate family businessman, and he ended his life.”

Merckle was Germany’s fifth richest man and the world’s 98th richest person. His business interests included the generic drugs-maker Ratiopharm and the cement-maker Heidelberg Cement. In all, his business conglomerate had about 100,000 employees and in 2008 reported €30 billion in annual sales. His holding company had been in talks with banks to secure credit after it ran up high levels of debt amid the global financial crisis.

The World of “Chaos”

My experience with some of my coaching clients gives me enough empirical evidence that money is just one of the crucial factors for happiness, and not the sole determinant. Through this chapter I really want to share the message that you can get all the happiness you desire provided you follow the right strategy for acquiring it.

Is Happiness Always Elusive?

All these people we just read about were super successful as per worldly standards. It appeared they had everything that a human being could dream for—money, fame, and followers; but in truth they had been running empty on the inside. They had spent years of their life chasing a dream, and when they got it, they realized it was not something that they really wanted.

Has happiness ever eluded you? If yes, chances are that you were chasing the wrong dream or just chasing one of the components of success, thinking that it will make you happy. And it is not just you. Unfortunately, the majority of our population live a stressful and unfulfilled life because they never tried to decode the authentic sources of happiness. They never analysed the subject called “happiness” in a holistic manner.

Getting in touch with your inner self and taking stock of your happiness on a regular basis, is one of the sure-shot ways of identifying and living your passion. Only if you are aware of what makes you happy, and what makes you unhappy, can you take charge of your life. True success lies in spending the maximum time of your life in doing what makes you happy, and avoiding what makes you miserable. It is also important that you keep in mind the effects of your choices on your fellow human beings.

There are two things to aim at in life—first to get what you want, and after that to enjoy it. Only the wisest of mankind achieve the second.

—Logan Pearsall Smith

Everyone Is Seeking “Happiness” but How Many Are Really “Happy”?

I have conducted hundreds of public seminars and interacted with tens of thousands of people. Two questions that I invariably ask people are:

1. How many of you want to have loads of money or to be super wealthy?
2. How many of you want to be happy in life?

And the answers that I get for these seemingly simple questions have never ceased to fascinate me. In response to the first question, about 60–65 per cent of the audience always raise their hands in the affirmative. However, in response to the second question, almost everyone in the audience raises the hand. I am yet to meet a human being who consciously says that he wants to be unhappy or sad.

Typical responses to the first question are:

“Of course, only a fool will not want loads of money.”

“Money is not important for me.”

“I want enough to live a comfortable life.”

“Too much money is the cause of all evil and misery.”

“Superwealthy people are greedy and arrogant. I do not want to be one.”

“I want loads of money but I know I cannot get it without doing anything wrong.”

“Yes I do, because I hate my job. If I have money, I will do nothing.”

“No, I do not want money. Rich people are of no good to society.”

“It requires lots of hard work; I do not think I can do that.”

Typical responses to the second question are:

“Of course, everybody wants to be happy.”

“I want to make others happy and that makes me happy.”

“Happiness is always more important than wealth.”

“I want happiness, but I also know that it is not possible to be happy forever.”

“Happiness is like a butterfly. The more you chase it, the more it gets away. I want it but I won’t chase it.”

What Are You Doing for Happiness?

Among the tens of thousands of people that I have interacted with over the past few years, I am yet to come across an individual

who says that he does not want to be happy. But when I ask them what they are doing to be happy in their lives, they do not have an answer for the same. They treat “happiness” as something that happens to them, and not something that they actively pursue.

Let me tell you that if you think happiness is the proverbial butterfly that will come and quietly sit on your shoulder once you stop chasing it, you are bound to be disappointed. If you do not believe my words, tell me how many times has it happened that you were standing still and a butterfly came to sit on your shoulder? Not many times, right? Happiness is something that we should consciously pursue through the actions we undertake in the direction of our passions. If we do not have a plan for our happiness, we will be a part of somebody else’s plan, and guess what, they do not always have our best interests included in their plan.

Why? Because it’s their plan. Simple!

Every action that you have ever taken or will ever take is directed at one of the following objectives—to avoid pain or to gain pleasure; in other words, towards “happiness.” The only problem is that you have never consciously analysed whether your actions actually help you in attaining happiness. Trust me, if you realize today how some of your actions are taking you away from the objective of attaining happiness, you will stop indulging in them immediately.

The Four Absolutely Essential Components of Happiness

My interactions with tens of thousands of people—comprising a range of individuals who are super successful to people who suffer from suicidal tendencies—have given me some great insights on the subjects of happiness and positive psychology. If you study the achievers, you find out what they are doing to stay in a state of happiness, and if you study the depressed, you get to know how they keep themselves in a state of depression. After years of reading and practical research, I can confidently identify the key factors affecting an individual’s happiness levels. An individual cannot

attain an enduring level of happiness in the absence of any of these factors in his life. Momentary happiness can easily be increased by any number of happenings, events, or things, like shopping, a great meal, the favourite chocolate, watching a movie, sound sleep, flowers, compliments, or partying.

I call them “the four absolutely essential components of happiness.” They are:

Wealth, Finances, Career

You cannot experience everlasting success without a great professional life, a certain amount of money, or financial security. Only a hermit can manage without having financial security, but even then he needs to make arrangements for the food needed for survival. If you are reading this book it is clear that you are not a hermit and mere survival is not your goal. You want to enjoy the best that life has to offer you, right?

Health—Mental and Physical

It is really unfortunate to see how reckless people are when it comes to taking care of their bodies. All worldly possessions, relationships, and wisdom of the ages cannot be enjoyed without a healthy body and mind. One reason why people do not succeed in their lives is because they do not have the energy and the vitality it takes to succeed. Take care of your body and treat it like a pious temple, not a garbage can. Your body is the only place you have got to live.

Relationships—Personal, Professional, and Spiritual

The quality of relationship you share with your own self, your family, your friends, and the higher self (God or Supreme Power) will determine the level of happiness and inner peace that you

experience in your life. Your professional relationships are also key to your happiness. We all need someone special to spend our lives with—caring family members, loving friends, and a spiritual connection with our Maker.

Growth (in These Three Areas)

Human spirit is forever seeking expansion and it is natural for us to grow in all the important areas of our life—wealth, health, and relationships. Human spirit is like a tree; if a tree is not growing it is dying. No matter how rich you are, how great your relationships are, or how wonderfully healthy you are at present, if you do not progress and have the same level of health, wealth, and relationships five years from now, you would turn unhappy, if not depressed.

Game of Life: You Have to Progress

Life is a game and we all are players. At what *level* are you going to *exit*?

I remember that when I was a child, I loved playing video games. My parents considered it a waste of time; hence we never had it at our place. Every day I used to get new games on rent and take them to my friend, who was the proud owner of a video-game console. Those were the days when computer games were not yet popular, and Xboxes and PlayStations had not even been heard of in India.

Some of my favourite games used to be Mario, Bomberman, Super Contra, and Ninja Turtles. I remember spending hours religiously playing these games, till the time I mastered all the levels of any particular game. In fact, it used to be a matter of shame if anyone stayed stuck at a particular level in the game. The person who could not progress beyond a certain level became the butt of all the jokes among friends.

I am sure that during your childhood, you too had played a few video games. I have a few questions for you:

- Did you play only Level One of the game again and again, or did you play as many levels as there were in the game?
- What do you have to say about the fun, intelligence, juice, and fulfilment involved in the various levels?
- Have you ever played any game in which only the first level was the most interesting one?

When I ask these questions to my audience, I always get respectively the following answers:

“I played all the levels. Did not rest till the time I had mastered all the levels.”

“Excitement increases as you progress to the next level. It takes a better player to master subsequent levels.”

“Level One is generally the easiest. It is fun only the first time. Thereafter, you get bored of it. One has to advance to next level if you really want to enjoy the game.”

You Cannot Escape This Game, If You Are Alive

Accept it or not, while you are alive, there are three games that you will always be playing:

1. Profession, Wealth, Finances, and Career
2. Health—Mental and Physical
3. Relationships—Personal, Professional, and Spiritual

Remember that only retards play the same level again and again, and quite surprisingly enjoy it too. Winners move to the next level. What level are you playing in the game of health, wealth, and relationships of your life? You cannot press the “pause” button and you cannot get out of life alive. The amounts of fun, intelligence,

rewards, excitement, adrenaline rushes, and fulfilment in your life increase as you advance to the higher levels. At what level do you plan to exit the game of life—a basic level or the most advanced level? Most of the people play this game at a very basic level and exit this world without realizing their fullest potential. They are frustrated because they are tired of playing the same level again and again; yet they fear to accept the bigger challenges that come as one aspires to grow in life. The game of life cannot be played on the back foot; you need to advance confidently and succeed in the biggest challenges that life throws at you. As you do that, you will become a better player in the game of life, and as a result a much happier individual.

If you are unhappy despite having great relationships and enjoying wonderful levels of health, it might be because you are not following the next principle called...

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- The four critical determinants of happiness are finances, health, relationships, and growth (in all the three areas). And unless we strive for all four of them to be present in our life, happiness will elude us.
- People may not want to be rich, but they always want happiness.
- Money and happiness are not mutually exclusive.

Self-Awareness

- How does your happiness circle look? Is it balanced?
- What is your happiness strategy?
- Have you been in your professional comfort zone for so long that you do not even realize it?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

The Work–Happiness Principle

The Work–Happiness Principle states that human beings younger than 18 years get happiness by spending money on things they love, while those older than 18 get happiness by making money out of things they love.

The Five-Rupee Lesson

I still remember the day when I got admission in the 1st standard in the year 1990. I was six years old and had just cleared my nursery school education. I was very much enjoying my classes until one of my classmates asked me what my pocket money was. I had no answer to this question because I did not even know what the words “pocket money” meant.

I went back home and asked my mom, “What is pocket money?,” and once I knew what it meant, it did not take me very long to start demanding one. I got ₹5 per day as my pocket money and I must admit, it felt like a million because then every day I could have an ice cream and a chocolate.

Years went by, and since neither I nor the Indian economy had experienced any real inflation, it was a long time before I demanded a raise. I do not know how, but the ice cream and chocolate costs stayed the same during the period 1990–94. When I was in the 5th

standard, peer pressure stepped in again and I realized that most of my friends at school were getting a higher pocket money than me—even the ones who scored less than me in exams—and hence it became a matter of utter shame for me. How can my mother do that to me? I went back home and presented my case with all the facts and figures, and she realized that I would not give in; hence she raised my allowance generously to ₹10 per day. Once again, I was a happy man. And this time I was smart enough to ask for regular raises, and trust me I was very good at proving why I totally deserved it. By the time I entered the 12th standard, the allowance had grown to ₹50 per day, and by the time I reached the final year of my bachelor's course, the allowance had grown to ₹100 per day—about 2,000 per cent hike since the time it started.

And Then the Job-Life Began...

When I got a job with the best company that came to our college campus for recruitment, my happiness knew no bounds. After all, it was the company which I had marked as my first priority when I started my college journey. I am sure all of you will agree that our first pay cheque comes along with a great sense of independence, and now I knew what it literally meant to *stand on one's feet*. And yes, I stopped taking money from my family, because what I earned on a daily basis was approximately 250 times my first allowance. In spite of having all the reasons to be happy and content, something inexplicable was missing.

I knew something was not “right” with the way I was living my life, but I was too afraid to be different from the crowd. I certainly wasn't alone in feeling frustrated. Most of the people around me hated their work, too. In fact, I had stopped believing in the existence of “happy workers.” Maybe I was naïve to think that I deserved long-term happiness out of my work-life. Maybe I should have been mature, acted like others, and collected my monthly salary and yearly bonuses. I was now beginning to realize what Rollo

May meant when he said “the opposite of courage is not cowardice, it is conformity.”

Some More Years Passed

Some more years passed, and the increments kept coming at the job but it appeared as if happiness was following a downward trend.

At some point, I stopped learning and started stagnating. During the first one year of my work–life, I accumulated one year’s worth of work experience and learning, but during the next three years the learning stopped. Have you ever met such people? People who would tell you that they have got 10 years worth of experience, but what they actually have is one year of experience repeated 10 times. Yes, the money hikes always come, but they do not necessarily come with “intellectual” hikes. I was busy for 12 hours every day, five days a week, for the four years of my life. If you asked me what were the new things I learned during the last two years at my work, I would not have been able to answer that question confidently. I did not hate my job, yet I did not love it.

My work became much more demanding and much less stimulating. My energy was consumed entirely by the effort required to appear interested through hours of repetitive work each day.

I even tried following the wisdom in some of the books, written on the subject of employee engagement, that insisted I could learn to feel excited about my job if I just pushed a little harder. I volunteered for new projects, proposed new ideas, and even started a new initiative called Idea Culture, but just ended up working for longer hours and with a stronger feeling of failure. I tried interviewing for postings at other departments in my company. I changed my team a couple of times but the feeling of work satisfaction always eluded me, and then I realized that the “something” that was missing was satisfaction. I realized one thing—human beings need something “much more” than a job; they need to follow their “calling.”

I realized that the lure of money can diminish quickly as you realize that you're trading a good portion of your life to earn the money.

The Assets

Imagine you invested all your life savings into some land, gold, or any other investment avenue, and even after 10, 20, or 30 years of that transaction, the value of the asset/invested amount stayed the same. How will that make you feel? Cheated, miserable, pathetic, and victimized! You will never invest a penny again in that security or instrument. Also, you will make sure that none of your family members or friends invest their savings into the same investment.

You would look for alternative investment avenues for your hard-earned money, but will never allow any pyramid scheme to cheat you again. It is totally unacceptable to you that your invested wealth does not grow at a reasonable rate with time.

Happiness: Your Biggest Asset or Your Biggest Liability?

What we value the most in our life, we call them our assets, right? We try to avoid any investment activity that could depreciate the value of our assets.

Now just think about the asset called "happiness" in your life. Is happiness something that you really value a lot? Has the amount of happiness increased over the number of years of your life or has it stagnated, or may be worse, has it decreased? If it is increasing, you are on the right track, but if it has stagnated or is diminishing, one reason could be that you are too busy doing activities that you are obliged to do and that leaves you with no time to spend on activities you love to do. Your professional life forms a sizeable chunk of activities that you "have to" do. Think about it. Our work occupies 60–70 per cent of our waking life, and hence it becomes all the more important to ask ourselves—"Am I spending the maximum

amount of my work time on things that I love doing?” If the answer is “No,” chances are that you are not living a life full of passion, vitality, joy, or happiness.

I started viewing happiness as an asset ever since I realized that ultimately all human beings are seeking happiness, through all their activities. As I said, I am yet to meet an individual who consciously tries to be unhappy. Even the people who are depressed seek some pleasure out of their state of depression.

What Made Me Happy?

By the fourth year of my job-life, I had already done years worth of introspection on the weekends to understand my hobbies, interests, and passions in life. One day I prepared a list of the things that made me feel happy and fulfilled about my existence—activities that made me feel vibrant, vital, and alive. The list looked somewhat like this:

1. Training—sharing ideas with people through public speaking.
2. Theatre—being on stage.
3. Writing—theatre scripts, stories, blogging, and yes, I always wanted to write books.
4. Travelling—exploring new places and meeting new people.
5. Research—spending time with myself and creating ideas and plans, reading.
6. Creating audio and video learning programmes that would outlive me, just like the books.
7. Studying organizational behaviour and human resource management.
8. Helping people with their problems.
9. Adventure activity.
10. Physical exercise.

Do note that I had not tried or experienced all of these things already in my life. In fact, there were certain things that I had not yet done at the time of preparing the list. It was more of an intuitive evaluation of my passions. We all have a voice inside us that knows what would give us ultimate happiness and bliss, but not everyone listens to that inner voice, or sometimes the voice gets drowned in the flood of our daily activities. Remember your Love List?

Reality Check

Once I had my Love List ready with me, I asked myself the next logical question—and I implore you to do the same with your list, since it would give you a lot of insights about the “elusive happiness” phenomenon plaguing your life.

“What am I actually doing on a daily basis?” Try to answer this with a Yes/No on your Love List, followed by some details. ‘

My Love List looked like the following:

1. Training—[NO]—receiving trainings instead of conducting them, and that too on the topic of financial modelling or Excel modelling.
2. Theatre—[NO]—watching theatre, instead of performing on stage.
3. Writing—[NO]—only confined to writing emails to clients.
4. Travelling—[NO]—travelled three or four hours every day, the famous Dehi–Gurgaon pilgrimage. Vacation was restricted to 10 days per year, and I could take only 18 days off in an entire year.
5. Research—[LIMITED]—all creative thinking and reading were confined only to weekends. Weekdays were spent on an autopilot mode.
6. Creating audio–video learning programmes—[NO]—directed a short, comic movie for my colleagues.

7. Studying organizational behaviour and human resource management—[YES]—got an opportunity to observe a lot of organizational behaviour and human resource management.
8. Helping people with their problems—[NO]—was too busy with my own work-related problems.
9. Adventure activity—[NO]—unless driving 80–90 km every day on Delhi–Gurgaon roads is counted as an adventure.
10. Physical exercise—[NOT REGULAR]—too stressed out to exercise regularly, because of odd work-hours.

With just one “Yes” out of 10, no wonder I was so unhappy, and felt unfulfilled with my work-life.

The Happiness Graph

One day, while working on a client project, I was plotting the revenues of a company since its formation. The year in which the company started also happened to be my birth year. A random idea came to my mind and I started plotting happiness in place of the revenues on the x-axis. I did not have any numbers to feed but I was curious to see the trend of the graph, especially the inflection points in the graph. Also, I was keen to know how the graph would look since there was so much gap between what I wanted to do and what I was actually doing.

My happiness increased till the age of 18, then stagnated for a while, before it started diminishing till the age of 25 years 6 months (when I resigned).

The Two Biggest Lessons

No matter how messed up my happiness graph looked, I was really glad that I did this exercise. Do not be depressed if your happiness graph looks equally bad or worse. Sometimes we all need a wake-up call and the two biggest lessons of my life came from this.

No wonder that my Happiness Graph looked somewhat like this....



Note: *Not to scale

**Data has been sourced from memories & experiences

“Human beings younger than 18 years get happiness by spending money on things they love, while those older than 18 get happiness by making money out of things they love.”

“If you could make money while doing something that you do not like or hate, chances are that you would make equal or more money while doing what you really enjoy.”

Armed with these two insights, and inspired by the elderly gentleman I met, I decided to take some action.

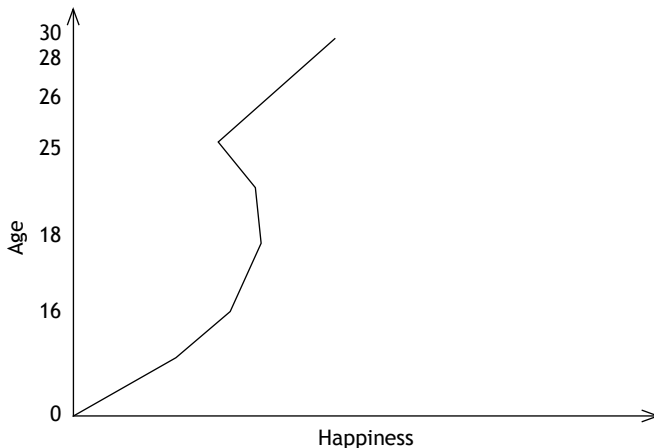
1. Training—[YES]—started Success Monks and till date we have trained tens of thousands of people. Goes without saying, the topic is not financial modelling.
2. Theatre—[YES]—involved more actively with theatre productions and our theatre group.
3. Writing—[YES]—this book is a proof.
4. Travelling—[YES]—travel around 60–100 days every year. They are usually “pleasure with business” trips.
5. Research—[YES]—designing, developing, and marketing training programmes and business modules, involve a lot of innovative thinking.

6. Creating audio–video learning programmes—[YES]—have already created around 100 hours of video programmes on the subject of personal and organizational development.
7. Studying organizational behaviour and human resource management—[YES]—do a lot of consulting projects with organizations for the betterment of their human capital.
8. Helping people with their problems—[YES]—it has become a profession now.
9. Adventure activity—[YES]—Every year I spend 15–20 days hiking, camping, and trekking. Even started taking certifications in scuba diving.
10. Physical exercise—[REGULAR]—with stress gone, I now enjoy my regular workout sessions.

The process was not very easy, yet it was not as difficult as I had imagined it. It is totally worth the effort to follow your passion and true calling.

Within a short span of two years, my happiness graph started looking like this:

And this is what happened to the Happiness Graph....



Note: *Not to scale

**Data has been sourced from memories & experiences

Yes, there is still a long way to go, but I am glad that I am moving in the right direction.

Think about it. How will your happiness graph change when you start living your passion?

Bet on Yourself—Who Else Will?

I have complete faith in human beings' ability to make a successful profession out of their passion. This is because of the simple fact that we are at our best when we are doing what we love. We love our work so much that we will do it for free, but we do it so well that people do not mind paying us for our services. It should be our moral obligation to give a chance to our talents, skills, and passions to flourish, but we do exactly the opposite and let our dreams die. All that you need to do is to uncover your true calling and make it a way of life.

One big fear that is faced by anyone who chooses the path of passion is, "Will I make enough money to survive?" What you do not realize is that what appears as an impossible task to you is like daily work for someone else. There are thousands of people in this world who are successfully making money out of things that make you happy. If they can do it, you too can do it.

Is Your Passion Sleeping?

I still remember the day when I was conducting a workshop for a group of 200 individuals on the topic of Passion into Profession. For over one hour, I had been shouting at the top of my lungs, preaching the idea that we can make money while doing what we love doing.

The session was going very smooth and I could sense that my message had managed to captivate the audience comprising working professionals, high-profile employees, and the business owners. I ended my session with the following words:

“I challenge you to tell me the thing you love doing, and I can teach you how to make money while doing the same.” I was about to retire to my seat, when suddenly I saw a raised hand in the audience. I said, “Yes, tell me about your passion.” The gentleman, in his late 20s or early 30s, stood up lazily and said in a husky voice, “I love sleeping. How can I make money while sleeping?”

“Did I give the wrong challenge?” was the second thought that passed my mind, the first one being, “Did I hear him right?” One hour of passionate talk on the theme “Passion into Profession,” assuring people to do what they love doing, and now I had been challenged to answer the question that had the potential to kill my entire presentation. Although it was the winter season and the temperature inside the auditorium was around 22°C, I could sense the sweat trickling down my forehead.

Two hundred faces were looking at me for the answer and I had to answer quickly. I knew that I had just a few seconds left before the audience started to perceive me as an ignorant speaker who lived in an ivory tower, and just happened to get lucky in his profession, or maybe a person who just read a chapter titled “Everything Is Possible” from the book of fairy tales. How can anyone make money while sleeping? I clearly needed more time and some more preparation to answer this random question thrown at me.

The processor in my brain worked faster than any search engine on the World Wide Web, and suddenly the words “director of sleep” flashed on the screen of my exhausted mind. I remember reading an article about a woman in China who had been hired to stay in five-star hotels and sleep on the bed as part of her job as a Hotel Test Sleeper at a boutique hotel in central Beijing. She had been selected out of 7,800 candidates and had stayed in more than 200 hotels until now. Hotel Test Sleeper (also known as “director of sleep”) profession is now a common profession in almost all the countries in this world, and is growing at a fast rate along with the hospitality industry.

I got my answer!

I shared the information about the profession, and how the people involved in it get to visit the best hotels in the world, and yes, they make money while sleeping, and by writing a report on the quality of their slumber at the hotel bed.

It is indeed fascinating to see hundreds of different kind of professions that have come up as a result of economic growth around the world. Are you still stuck with your limited list of professions that you can pursue in life? Have faith in your ability to succeed at new things and ventures; you are much more talented than you think you are. Once touched by the power of passion, you would be able to tap your dormant powers.

Remember, if you could make money while doing something as unproductive as sleeping, then one can certainly make money while doing something productive and worthwhile—you just need to find out how.

Passion, it lies in all of us, sleeping...waiting...and though unwanted...unbidden...it will stir...open its jaws and howl. It speaks to us...guides us...passion rules us all, and we obey. What other choice do we have? Passion is the source of our finest moments. The joy of love, the clarity of hatred, and the ecstasy of grief. It hurts sometimes more than we can bear. If we could live without passion maybe we'd know some kind of peace but we would be hollow. Empty rooms shuttered and dank. Without passion we'd be truly dead.

—Joss Whedon

Good News! Anyone Can Follow Their Passion

One of the biggest misconceptions people have is that “following your passion” means “starting something on your own.” Please note that if you think I am suggesting that all of you quit your jobs and start your own business, then I would be guilty of faulty miscommunication, and you of selective listening. The world is full of businessmen who hate their business and it causes them as much stress as a despised job causes to the engaged employee. What I am suggesting is to ask this one question:

“Does the job/business I am involved in make me happy and is it a source of energy for me?”

If your answer is an unequivocal and loud “Yes,” you are in the right job, work, or profession.

However, if your work is the biggest source of stress, and nothing more than a money generation plant for you, it is time for you to reconsider your work philosophy. It is really sad to see people in their 20s living lives full of stress, and blaming everyone but themselves for their work-related frustrations. Let me make it very clear. If you are not happy with your profession—job or business—you have no one else to blame except yourself. The only people who deserve and get success in life are the people who acknowledge and take responsibility for their failures and then do something about it.

And one more thing that we all need to understand is—money is just one of the satisfiers in the list of work satisfiers and not the biggest reason why people are dissatisfied with their profession. The mass social conditioning or the philosophy of “accepting things the way they are” has done a big damage to our society. It has clipped the wings of our imagination and forced us to bow down to the circumstances in our lives. Hence we all need to change our paradigms about success at work.

We should all find out our passion and then try to make money out of it, rather than joining any profession that offers us money and then finding passion in it.

Call it my ignorance or intelligence, I feel pity for the people who tell me that their passion is to start a business. Passion is “what you want to do and why you want to do it,” and business is just one of the forms in which you can choose to live your passion.

So primarily, work–happiness is all a matter of “follow your passion as a profession.”

Writing isn’t about making money, getting famous, getting dates, getting laid, or making friends. In the end, it’s about enriching the lives of those who will read your work, and enriching your own life as well.

It's about getting up, getting well, and getting over. Getting happy, okay? Getting happy.

—Stephen King, *On Writing*

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- Human beings younger than 18 years get happiness by spending money on things they love, while those older than 18 get happiness by making money out of things they love.
- If you have to be an employee, be an employee only to your passion.
- We should all find out our passions and then try to make money out of it, rather than joining any profession that offers us money and then finding passion in it.

Self-Awareness

- Find out five people who are making money while doing what you would love to do.
- Compare your first salary to your present salary. Has your happiness also grown in the same proportion?
- What does your happiness graph look like?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

The Potential Principle

The Potential Principle states that human beings have tremendous potential to live a life they desire. They can accomplish any objective in life if they commit themselves to it and are willing to take the requisite action. Their potential shrinks and expands depending upon their self-beliefs.

The Golden Buddha

On one of my recent trips to Thailand, I came across an interesting legend about the world-famous “Golden Buddha.”

A group of Tibetan monks used to take care of a Buddhist temple at Wat Traimit in Bangkok. It had a huge clay statue of the Buddha, which was over 10 ft tall and weighed about 5.5 tonnes. The origins of this statue remain uncertain. It is made in the Sukhothai Dynasty style, and is thought to have been made during the Sukhothai period in the 13th–14th centuries, although it could have been made after that time. The temple didn’t have a building big enough to house the statue; it was kept for 20 years under a simple tin roof.

Finally in May 1955, a new Viharn building was built at the temple; so it was decided to house the statue there.

During one of the final attempts to lift the statue from its pedestal, the ropes holding the statue broke, and the statue fell down

hard on the ground. At that time, some of the plaster coating of the statue got chipped off, allowing some metal surface underneath to be seen—which turned out to be pure gold. The work was immediately stopped so that the full evaluation could be made.

Later, all plaster was carefully removed with the help of hammer and careful chiselling, so that the Golden Buddha could be seen in all its glory. The statue is 3 m (9.8 ft) tall and weighs 5.5 tonnes and is made up of pure gold.

Expert historians were called and the researchers began to discover the origin of the Golden Buddha.

The legend has it that several centuries earlier, the Golden Buddha was situated in a monastery. A community of monks used to worship the Golden Buddha and take care of the monastery. During the 15th or 16th century, the monks received the news that the Burmese army was planning an attack to plunder the monastery. Concerned that the invading army would loot the shrine for its Golden Buddha, the monks covered their Buddha with a thick layer of clay. It took those monks days to veil the giant statue with plaster and when they finished, the Golden Buddha appeared to be a Buddha of clay. The monks knew that the Burmese army would surely have no interest in what appeared to be a clay Buddha.

They did, however, kill all the monks of the particular community. The secret that the clay Buddha was in reality the Golden Buddha died with those monks. The Golden Buddha stayed under clay for about 400 years.

The Golden Buddha inside You

I came to know about the fascinating story of the Golden Buddha last year, on one of my trips to Thailand. As I saw this magnificent statue of the Golden Buddha and read about this story, a thought occurred to me—“We human beings are just like the Golden Buddha.”

Each one of us has tremendous potential inside us—something that we cannot even imagine fathoming. And because we are too afraid to express our unlimited potential to the entire world, we cover it with the clay of mediocre existence. We avoid doing big things which we were meant to do, so that we do not get noticed by the people. We are satisfied with playing small in life, so that our achievements are not perceived as threats by fellow citizens. Being part of a crowd has become more important than being our true self.

Reclaim Your Unlimited Potential

To reclaim the Golden Buddha, the restoration architects had to remove a thick layer of clay. However, I believe that it is a greater challenge to make a human being see his or her true potential because they are covered with two layers instead of just one that covered the Golden Buddha. The second layer is the covering that humans put on themselves to hide their clay self. It is the layer of self-image or perception about one's capabilities and limitations.

The Social Conditioning

The clay covering put by the monks could be compared to the social conditioning (what society puts on you) that all of us have undergone. The clay layer that protected the Golden Buddha from one attack of the Burmese army is the same layer that kept the Golden Buddha away from millions of worshippers for over four hundred years. We can say this because millions of devotees from all over the world now visit Thailand to see the Golden Buddha, every year.

Think about it—what the world told you about your potential, your capabilities, your friends, your enemies, your limitations, your dreams, your passion, your profession, your resources, your

vulnerabilities, the social norms, protocols, and mass behaviour. All the “should” and “must” that society imposed on you form part of the social conditioning.

What were you told about the topics of education, profession, dreams, passion, knowledge, or money?

The Self-Image

As children in our society grow up and find themselves covered with the clay of social conditioning, they start believing it to be their true self. They almost lose touch with their real golden self because they have never seen it. They simply followed and believed what others—friends, family, and strangers—told them about their potential and limitations. As mature adults, what humans try to do is to hide their social conditioning, under the wrapping of self-image which they consciously decide to pursue. In order to separate themselves from the crowd, they decide to cover the clay statue with gold polish. So the unlimited potential of a human is covered under layers of social conditioning and perceptions about the self. Would you ever cover a pure gold ornament with clay, and then put gold polish on it so that it at least looks like gold? No, that would be foolish, right? Yet all of us do the same with our true self.

We start taking pride in little accomplishments, get satisfied with petty victories, and settle for gold polish, when we have the goldmine inside us. We settle for any job, rather than pursuing our true calling. We tend to draw vain happiness and satisfaction from the fact that we have successfully hidden our sinister clay from the outer world, while in the process we hide all the gold from our own self.

Start Living Your Potential

Cut through the clay rather than polish it. Stop living a life of pretensions—be honest with your own self. Have faith in your

unlimited potential to chase and realize any dream. You do not have to toe the line; your real life lies beyond the boundaries.

Take out your Love List now, and go through each and every dream you would like to accomplish. Notice how you allowed your passions to be conditioned as per the wishes of the society. Once you have freed yourself from the social conditioning, it is time to unlock your unlimited potential by challenging false self-beliefs, self-concepts, and limitations.

Once you do that your passion will be a source of inspiration for the entire world.

Unlocking Your Professional Potential

The golden self is revealed to most people only when they experience some financial, health, or relationship crisis. However, you do not necessarily have to face any of these crises before you start harnessing your unlimited potential.

References

Think about it. What do you want to do in life—the business or job where you would like to spend the rest of your life? What are the various things you would like to try? Do you know the names of at least 10 people who are professionally doing what you would like to do with your career? Whenever any goal is given to human beings, the first thing they look for is the references that exist pertaining to the goal. The more references they have about the task, the more capable they feel about achieving it. It is very critical to consider your goal within the realms of what is humanly achievable; else there is a high chance that you would not even attempt it.

Imagination

Another way to unleash the true potential of the human spirit is the power of imagination. Maybe what you want to accomplish

in life has never been done by any other fellow human being; maybe your business model or idea has not yet been implemented by anyone before you; may be the destination you are trying to reach has no road signs or roadmaps. So what are you supposed to do? Give up on your passions and ideas? The answer is a big and resounding “No.” On the contrary, you should use your imagination to bring your passion to fruition, to make the invisible visible, to challenge the existing limits of human possibilities, and to break free from them. Imagination is the ability to form a mental image of something that is not perceived through the senses. It is the ability of the mind to visualize mental scenes, objects, or events that do not exist, are not present, or have happened in the past. Your success and wealth in life would be directly related to your ability to push the frontiers of possibility by using your imagination. A developed and strong imagination does not make you a daydreamer or an impractical person. On the contrary, it strengthens your creative power, and is a great tool for recreating and remodelling your world and life. The ability to imagine is what separates superachievers from mediocre people.

On the opening day of Walt Disney World, Walt’s brother Roy was interviewed. The reporter commented that it was a shame that Walt did not live to see it. Roy quietly replied, “If Walt hadn’t seen it first, we wouldn’t be seeing it today.”

If You Believe, You Are Right

If you believe you are lucky to have that job, and cannot get anything better no matter how much you try—you are right!

If you believe you cannot start a business, and it will not work no matter how much you try—you are right!

If you believe the only assets you can create in your lifetime are a house and a car—you are right!

If you believe that the only reason why you were born was to lead an average life, because you cannot make it large, no matter how much you try—you are right!

If you believe you have no control over your life, no matter how much you try—you are right!

Yes, indeed you are right. But do you know why you can be right so many times? You were right so many times because you never imagined that your beliefs could be “wrong.”

And while you spend your life trying to be right, you choose to stay small.

Challenge your limits, even though they appear real to you. If you think your limitations are “real,” you tend to keep them.

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- You have unlimited potential and you are at present using only a minute fraction of it.
- Potential is unlocked through references and imagination.
- If you believe you cannot start a business, or it will not work no matter how much you try—you are right.

Self-Awareness

- What are the five things you believe about your potential when it comes to following your passion?
- What are the five success stories related to your passion that really inspire you?
- Do you think people who are very successful are very different from you?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

The Knowledge Principle

The Knowledge Principle states that there is a difference between education and schooling. It also states that you do not truly know something unless you have done it and can teach it to others. Knowing and actually doing what you know are poles apart. A lot of us know what we can do, but very few of us actually do what we know.

A Migrant Family

He was born in Tarn Taran, near Amritsar, in Punjab, India, on 17 July 1982, the youngest of four children, into a traditional Sikh family. His father wanted a better life, if not for himself then for his four children, and he believed that a better life existed in the United States.

In 1985, the parents received a visa for the United States through the Diversity Visa programme, and the following year, when he was four, the family settled in San Jose, California. His parents had arrived in America with only \$25 in their pockets.

His father Avtar Chahal got employed as a security guard, for \$3.35 an hour—the minimum wage at the time—and his mother Arjinder Chahal found a job as a nurse's aide. Since both the parents worked double shifts, Gurbaksh Chahal's elder sister Kamal

became a second mother to him. She helped him with his homework and went to school meetings on his parents' behalf.

His father was a disciplined, hard-working man, who had deep conviction in the merits and methods of conventional education. He believed that education was the key that opened all the locks to all the doors in the world, and wanted his four children to become doctors and engineers.

A School Dropout

By the time Gurbaksh was 16, he was seriously studying Internet and dotcom industry trends. He started an Internet advertising venture of his own, from the bedroom, using his desktop. He realized that the formal education was not taking him any closer to his dream of becoming a tech entrepreneur. He could not bear another day of school and was ready to take the biggest risk of his life. He wanted to drop out of high school to pursue his dreams, but was terrified of approaching his father who valued education above almost everything else. How could he tell him that he wanted to drop out of high school?

Finally, after weeks of contemplation, he decided to discuss the matter with his dad. He hesitantly told his dad about the Internet advertising business he had been running from his computer. He told him that the prospects were good for him to follow it full time. As he said this, he showed his bank statement to his father, which depicted a balance of around \$100,000. Imagine a 16-year-old showing his bank statement to a father, with a huge amount like that?

All hell broke loose at the Chahal residence. His parents thought that he was surely engaged in some illegal activities, for according to them it was impossible for a teenager to make so much money. They did not have that kind of savings even after working double shifts for 20 years.

It was only after he patiently explained things to them that they calmed down.

He explained how he had spent the past six months studying the dotcom market, watching young companies grow very rich, very quickly, and trying to figure out how they did it. The Web was fast becoming the next big sales tool and he wanted to pursue his business full time to make the most of this opportunity. He then expressed his desire to drop out of school.

“I had hoped you would become a doctor,” his father said, looking at him as if his son just murdered his long-cherished dream. Two days later, his father agreed to drive him to school to talk to the principal and young Gurbaksh thanked him for believing in his dreams.

“I believe in you because I can see that you believe in yourself,” was his father’s reply.

His father requested the principal to allow Gurbaksh to drop out of school for a period of one year to pursue his dream. If at the end of one year things did not click, Gurbaksh would join the school again, starting from where he left. The principal agreed and Gurbaksh was now free to pursue his dream.

Millionaire at 18

On 15 December 1998, aged 16, Gurbaksh Chahal dropped out of high school to work full time at his first venture, ClickAgents. By the summer of 1999, barely six months in business, his company was posting revenues of \$300,000 per month.

Two years later, on 1 November 2000, ValueClick announced that it had agreed to buy ClickAgents in a \$40 million all-stock merger. Chahal had a three-year non-compete agreement with ValueClick.

On 12 January 2004, Chahal formed BlueLithium. BlueLithium specialized in behavioural targeting of banner advertising. In 2006, under Chahal’s leadership, BlueLithium was named one of the

top 100 private companies in the United States for the third time in a row by AlwaysOn, and in 2006, it joined Google, Skype, and Salesforce.com in being named Innovator of the Year. On 15 October 2007, Yahoo bought BlueLithium for \$300 million in cash.

Finally a Doctorate

In April 2010, Chahal was awarded the Leaders in Management Award and an Honorary Doctorate degree in Commercial Science from Pace University in 2010 in recognition for his career achievements as an entrepreneur.

And yes, not many doctors have that kind of net worth. His advice for anyone who wishes to succeed:

Listen to your heart. We tend to do well at things we love, so find something you love—or learn to love what you’re doing.

—Gurbaksh Chahal

What Is Knowledge?

Due to the degree-hoarding culture that is rampant in almost all the economies of the world, people have started believing that formal education, comprising GPA and degrees, is the only knowledge that one needs to succeed. I would like to reiterate here that a good formal education can guarantee survival but it certainly does not guarantee massive success. A good formal education can give your career a desired launch, but what would keep it flying high, and the speed at which it would fly would be determined by the real knowledge you possess in life.

While Gurbaksh Chahal might be a school dropout, he is one of the most knowledgeable person when it comes to the business he is in.

Thomas Edison was probably the most famous and productive inventor of all time, with more than one thousand patents in his

name, including the electric light bulb, phonograph, and motion picture camera. He dropped out after only three months of formal education. Luckily, his mother had been a schoolteacher in Canada and homeschooled young Edison. Wonder where we would have been without his inventions?

Some of the most successful people you have heard of—Bill Gates, Richard Branson, Mark Zuckerberg, Colonel Sanders, Charles Dickens, Elton John, Ray Kroc, Harry Houdini, Walt Disney, and Dhirubhai Ambani—do not have a formal master's degree but they have a PhD in producing results in the area of their passion.

Unlike most people, they never stopped learning after getting out of schools or acquiring a degree. Think about it. When was the last time you read a nonfiction book or attended a seminar related to your passion?

Knowledge Is a Lifelong Pursuit

One of the best decisions you can take for the realization of your passion is the commitment to become a sincere student of the subjects related to your passion. I started my venture in the field of inspirational speaking and transformative psychology without any formal degree, and initially it was difficult to win acceptance from the audience. But my decision to be a sincere student in the field of personal development ultimately paid off. Now I feel very humbled and grateful to see a lot of PhDs and scholars attending my talks and workshops.

How did I do that? Simple! By reading the best books ever written on the subjects of positive psychology, organizational behaviour, metaphysics, NLP, quantum physics, and personal development, not to mention countless research papers I read and the personal development seminars I attended.

When was the last time you picked up a book or a podcast related to your passion? Or when was the last time you attended a training programme or coaching class related to your dream career?

The answers to these two questions undoubtedly determine how successful you would be in making a profession out of your passion. It is disheartening to notice that people have forgotten the importance of being a student; you simply cannot master a subject without being a sincere student.

Study everything that you must know in order to bring your passion to fruition. Do not stop once you know it; take every possible action to apply what you have learned.

Knowing Is Not Enough

You know how to eat food, but unless you actually eat it you will not live long enough, will you?

You know how to wear clothes, but unless you actually wear them you will not be considered dressed, will you?

You know how to read books, but unless you actually read them you will not know what is inside the book, will you?

You know how to sing, but unless you actually sing you cannot be considered a singer, can you?

You know how to sleep, but unless you actually sleep you cannot get rest, can you?

Yes, these examples sound random and you must be thinking I am off my rocker; yet if you understand what I am alluding to, you would understand one of the greatest diseases that plagues human enterprise and potential. I call it the “I know” disease. Happiness and fulfilment come not from merely knowing what needs to be done; it comes from doing what needs to be done.

You cannot build your reputation on what you are going to do.

—Henry Ford

“I Know” Disease

How often have you been guilty of using the words “I know” without actually doing what you knew? Yes, I understand you

do not have to take action on all the things you know, but when it comes to your passion you must take massive action. You can never succeed only because of what you know; you would have to take some action on what you know. The only time when you would get rewarded because of what you know is when you are on the hot seat of “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?” But even there, you need to open your mouth and answer.

I wrote this book with the sincere intention of helping you attain mastery in the spheres of your calling. There is no juice and fun involved in being a dabbler; you must master your passion and you do that by living it and not merely knowing things about it. I wish to challenge you to take action on what you know, and keep on fine-tuning your action strategy till the time you get what you want.

I firmly believe beyond a shadow of doubt that the phrase “I know” has done more harm than good to the spirit of human ambition. I often tell my workshop participants that if they want to improve the quality of their lives by leaps and bounds, they should stop using the phrases “I know” or “I already know that” as a response to anything they hear or read; unless they have implemented it in their lives. These phrases are the killers of the human drive, as if knowing something is a big enough achievement and no further progress needs to be made. They should only be used when someone is telling you a joke; your passion is not a joke.

People pass judgements on professions just on the basis of what they know about it; without doubting that their source of knowledge may not be right or is not the only source of knowledge. Whenever you are exposed to any information about your passion, be a sincere student. Never discard the information even if it is repetitive in nature; because you truly do not know it unless you have implemented the information. Repetition is the key to mastery.

The Levels of Mastery

These are four levels of mastery you should aspire to attain with your respective passions. Once you do that you would be living the Knowledge Principle to the fullest extent and success would be guaranteed.

Success in your passion is as sure as eggs, if you are willing to scale these four levels of mastery.

Cognitive Mastery

It all starts with the awareness of what you can do with your professional life. What are the possible careers you can choose over the next 5, 10, 15, 25, or 40 years? The sources for cognitive mastery could be formal education, books, newspapers, television, movies, training programmes, friends, or family members. You have a host of possibilities available to choose from. You can be a lawyer, doctor, architect, engineer, scientist, musician, dancer, consultant, banker, analyst, politician, actor, copywriter, academician, trainer, sportsman, interior decorator, fashion designer, journalist, business owner, yoga guru, wedding planner, so on and so forth. This is the most basic level one must master to reach one's professional potential, since you cannot get passionate about what you are not even aware of. It helps you in choosing your calling from a deluge of options available. Cognitive mastery is the first level of knowledge mastery; I call it the "I know" or the "awareness" or the "information" stage.

Emotional Mastery

Once you have the information on possible careers, it is time for some introspection to understand where your heart lies. One misconception that people have is that emotional mastery is achieved once they have discovered their passion; things could not be

farther from the truth. Discovering your passion is just the first step in emotional mastery; in reality, it is a never-ending pursuit to discover the real “whys” behind your passion. For example, if you came to the conclusion that your passion was to become a lawyer, this does not mean that you would automatically take all the actions required to become a successful lawyer. You would be required to fuel your desire constantly and make it an all-consuming obsession. Emotional mastery involves following a regime wherein you would never take your sight off from your passion. It involves creating compelling reasons for you to pursue your passion and why life would be meaningless without it. As they say, an ounce of emotion is worth a ton of information. This is the second level of mastery and I call it “I feel about what I know” stage.

Action Mastery

Action serves as the bridge between your inner world of emotions and passion, and the outer world of reality and results. This is the most important step that is required for any success in your passion. It is the connecting link between human imagination and physical reality. There is not much of a difference between a person who has a particular skill but does not use it, and a person who does not have the skill.

How can I say all this with so much conviction? It took me a lot of effort to master the habit of taking action. For years I nurtured the dream of starting my own venture in the area of inspirational speaking; yet I let fear and inaction delay the decision by a couple of years.

I would not sugar-coat this—either take action on your passions or just abandon them. Action mastery includes taking intelligent actions, and developing the flexibility to change them if your present actions are not producing the desired outcome. You must take action not till the time you meet failure, but until you get the

desired success. This is the penultimate level of mastery. I call it “I act on what I feel” stage.

Coaching Mastery

It is not enough to succeed in life. An understanding of what it takes to succeed is also very crucial. A person who has examined his or her success, and failure, can repeat his success and avoid failures in future. He can also explain the process to his fellow human beings, thus helping them in their lives. Coaching mastery is the highest level of mastery. It is the ability to replicate your success and to teach others how to do the same with their passions. This is the ultimate level of knowledge mastery and only a select few have the patience and will to attain it. Only as a coach can you teach others what you know, feel, and act upon.

What is the level of mastery you are at, when it comes to your passion?

Reading Helps in Mastery

The advent of television, movies, and the Internet has caused millions of people to spend less and less time on reading books. The schedules are too packed to make space for good nonfiction or a piece of literature. All the possible information one needs for day-to-day survival is now available on the Internet via the search engines.

Book readers are becoming an extinct community. People prefer to read summaries and reviews on the Internet rather than reading the entire book on their own. I am not against the Internet; in fact, I believe it has been one of the greatest inventions of mankind. What I do not like is the fact that over-reliance on search engines has caused us to become retrievers of information rather than creators of information. We refuse to learn some important things and other priceless lessons, taking them for granted as they are freely available on the Internet. The desire to have instant

access to knowledge is somewhere affecting the human ability to patiently analyse the thoughts and ideas presented. When you read a book for about 10–15 hours, you develop a certain amount of concentration and focus which is a great quality one can aspire for. Yes, there is some wonderful information available on the Internet but nothing can take the place of books.

As part of my research for this book, I realized that one thing that has been common amongst the most successful people in this world is their habit of reading. They might not have completed their formal education but they have read as many books as possible on the topics of their interest. There might be a few exceptions, but barring them all successful people have been book lovers. They read every possible book that could have taken them closer to their goals.

Take out your Love List and write down five books that you should read to succeed in any of your passions. If you are not aware of it, use the Internet. This is the reason why I said that the Internet is one of the best inventions of mankind.

Superperformers in various industries read one or two books related to their profession per week; good performers read one or two books per month. While an average performer reads one or two books in a year, poor performers (you guessed it right) do not read. What are you choosing to be?

Books can be dangerous. The best ones should be labelled “This could change your life.”

—Helen Exley

What’s Your Topic?

Do you know that there have been millions of people in this world who have achieved every goal you can possibly set for yourself? And enough research has been done to understand the causes of their success and all the findings have been documented in the form of books, training programmes, and audio–video materials.

Do you know that there are books written on the topic “How to be a successful filmmaker”?

Do you know that there are books written on the topic “How to be a successful lawyer”?

Do you know that there are books written on the topic “How to be a successful real estate investor”?

Do you know that there are books written on the topic “How to be a successful doctor”?

Do you know that there are books written on the topic “How to be a successful trainer”?

Do you know that there are books written on the topic “How to be a successful actor”?

Do you know that there are books written on the topic “How to be a successful singer”?

Do you know that there are books written on the topic “How to be a successful fashion designer”?

Yes, the book alone might not make you successful, but you can learn a lot of valuable things which no formal schooling can compensate. These books have been written by various experts who produced great results either in their own lives or by studying people who did. I cannot possibly overemphasize the importance of reading books related to one's passions in life.

Any person who reads a book is a human being, and every human being has some problems and dreams which he wants to solve and achieve respectively. If a person spent 10 years to identify a solution to one of the problems that you are facing and he has documented it in a book which you can read in a matter of 10 hours, you would be a fool not to access that powerful treasure of perspective. *Every problem that you have ever faced or will ever face has a solution which has been documented by someone in the form of a book or a seminar. Never let your ego come in the way of your learning.*

Even the dreams you have in your mind, have been achieved by someone else and all the strategies that were used by them are available under the so called self-help category that you have been avoiding for years. The

worst stupidity is to spend five years on a goal that could have been achieved in five months. I am a big fan of the personal development industry, and I believe that we all need some coaching in certain areas to live a life of better quality. Remember, it is not about self-help; it's about success strategies.

You would be the same person five years from now except for the books you read, and the people you meet.

—Charlie “Tremendous” Jones

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- There is a difference between education and schooling. You do not truly know something unless you have done it and can teach it to others. Knowing and actually doing what you know are poles apart.
- The worst stupidity is to spend five years on a goal that could have been achieved in five months. Learn to learn from others.
- Every problem you have ever faced or can face has already been faced by others. Some of them have even written the solution to those problems in a book.

Self-Awareness

- Do you hate self-help and personal developments books? Why? How many books out of millions that exist have you read before you formed that opinion?
- How many books have you read on the professions that you would love to be in?
- Do you think your problems are unique to you and the solutions to those problems have never been documented in any book by anyone?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

The Association Principle

The Association Principle states that the quality of your professional life—income, work ethic, and relationship—is greatly influenced by the people you spend maximum time with. Never underestimate the power of influence.

Eagle amongst Crows

Once upon a time there was a village boy who used to go to the jungle every day to collect wild grass for his horses. From morning till late afternoon, he would cut as much grass as possible and then make a bundle of the grass so that it could be carried easily. Then he used to have his lunch that his mother had packed for him, and then would sleep for a couple of hours before heading home.

One day after his siesta, the little boy discovered an eagle's egg lying on the grass bundle he had collected during the day. He thought, "It must have fallen from its nest due to the winds. It was sheer good fortune that the egg did not fall on the ground else it would have cracked."

The little boy had no idea what to do with the egg; but he knew one thing for sure, that without a nest it would never hatch. He remembered that there was a crow's nest on one of the trees on the way back to his village. Since he was adept at climbing trees,

he decided to carefully put the egg in the crow's nest; besides, he thought that this was the best he could do under the given circumstances.

He picked up the egg and on his way back home, climbed the tree to place it amongst the other crow eggs lying in the nest. Eventually, the little eagle was hatched along with the other crows and grew up assuming itself to be one. With that assumption in mind, it lived like a crow, even though it was double the size of other crows, and had stronger and larger wings. It behaved exactly like the crows around it—flying to decent heights, and eating insects and worms. The crows would never fly too high or travel great distances alone, and the eagle also imitated its crow friends. One day the eagle saw another creature just like itself gliding gracefully and majestically in the open sky. It asked the fellow crows, “What is that beautiful bird? It looks like me but how come it is flying so high and effortlessly?”

The crows replied in unison,

“No way! It is not like you. It is an eagle and it has got qualities that we crows have not been blessed with. Eagles fly alone at high altitudes and no other bird can reach the height of the eagle. They have a strong vision and the ability to focus on something which is five km away. Eagles do not eat dead worms and insects. They feed only on fresh prey. It is the only bird that can fly during the storms. The eagle uses the storm's wind to lift it higher. Once it finds the wind of the storm, the eagle uses the raging storm to lift itself above the clouds. It lives up to the age of 70 years while we crows die by the time we are 15–20 years old.

“Do you think you possess all these abilities and powers that we just mentioned? You are a crow just like us, believe us. Do not ever try to do what eagles do, else you would kill yourself.”

Years passed and the eagle continued to eat worms and dead insects, along with fellow crows. It never used its talons for preying. It now looked weak and frail; no longer like the majestic eagles it saw cruising the high skies. To its surprise it started looking like its friends who were crows.

End of Flight

A few more years passed and all the crows began getting older and withered with time, since they had already lived for 15 years. The eagle was growing weak but it was still stronger than fellow crows. For those 15 years, this group flew together every morning to look for worms and dead insects, but with each passing day the act of finding worms and insects was becoming difficult for the crows. They had realized that their end was now near. Even though the eagle still had the vigour and the sharp sight to look for dead worms and insects, the fellow crows found the task of feeding themselves too difficult. They were now dependent on their baby crows to feed them insects and worms; but soon the young crows got tired of feeding the oldies and they shifted to other nearby forests. The eagle in the group was still strong, and it tried its best to fetch worms to feed its crow friends, but it was too difficult for it to manage so much food alone.

A Trade for Life

One day, a man with a box full of earthworms came to the forest. The crows stopped him and asked, “What do you have in the box and where you are going?” The man, a local village healer, replied that he had earthworms and he was going to the market to trade them for some crow nails, since they were used in some expensive medicine. The crows said, “We’ve got enough nails with us. Every week we would give a nail and you give us that box full of earthworms.”

The healer asked, “How many nails do you have?”

“We have enough nails amongst us to last us till the time we die,” said one of the crows. Then pointing towards the eagle, it continued, “This is the strongest crow of our group, and it has the longest nails. Even if we run out of nails, its nails are four times

the size of our nails. But it will give those nails to you only after we have given ours.” The healer agreed to the proposal of giving a box of worms for one nail every week; even the eagle was happy since it could now eat with its friends and no longer had to find worms for them.

The trade of crow nails continued for two years, till all the crows had given away their nails. Some of the crows of the group died due to infection caused because of nail breakage but it was better than dying from starvation. According to most of the crows, they had made a smart decision by exchanging nails for worms.

Finally, the day came when the crows had exhausted all their nails, and it was the eagle’s turn to trade its huge nails for the worm. For the next six months, it exchanged all its nails; because they were four times bigger than the previous nails, they gave one after every fortnight for four boxes of worms. By the time the eagle had given up all its nails and thus withered more and become exhausted, all the crows died due to old age. The lifespan of the crows ranged from 15 to 20 years and all of them lived to be more than 15 years of age. The eagle was happy that its friends did not starve to death and died a natural death.

The eagle was still alive, but it did not have any talons left. It could still manage to get enough worms to eat by using its beak. It could no longer perform its usual “dive and catch the prey” stunt, and spent the time on the ground digging holes in the ground with its beak, expecting to find worms. The eagle was now patiently waiting for its death, which it knew was near. It had outlived its friends but knew that crows could live for a maximum of 20 years. Without talons, it would be lucky to reach that age.

To its surprise, the eagle lived for another 15 years, to the age of 35. And finally when the eagle could not hold together the scattered pieces of her frail and weak self, its end approached near. And finally, while dying, a random thought ran through its mind—“Was I really a crow who lived for 15 years more than it was

supposed to live or was I an eagle who could have lived for 70 years?” With this thought in its mind, it died.

Living Half-without Wings?

Now, the story is obviously apocryphal, but nonetheless loaded with meaning for all of us. Think about it.

- Did people around you tell you, “You are just one of them”?
- Did people around you tell you, “You can never have the qualities of high-flyers”?
- Did people around you tell you, “You cannot survive at high altitudes, hence think small”?
- Did people around you make you “settle for dead and dull projects” while you “could have executed any exciting project”?
- Did people around you make you “seek shelter during a crisis,” when actually you “could have used the storm to fly even higher”?
- Did people around you tell you that your professional lifespan was very short?
- Did people around you make you “trade your potential” for peanuts?

Human beings unconsciously try to emulate people around them to gain their approval. A young kid automatically tries to win the approval of his parents or teachers; if not the parents or teachers, then his siblings; if not the teachers then his classmates; if not his classmates then his best friends. He does not try to be too different from them even if being different is his natural self. In order to be one of them, he tries to be like them and do things like them.

There is nothing wrong in emulating others, but we should not emulate their limitations or lose our strengths and unique talents in the process.

Two Kinds of People

You know a variety of people—smart, stupid, intelligent, dumb, fat, slim, polite, short-tempered, so on and so forth. Based upon your preferences, ignorance, or circumstances, you spend time with some of them or perhaps all of them. And the people you end up spending your time with, determine the quality of experiences in your personal and professional lives. *The effect of influence is generally unconscious and often goes unnoticeable.*

If you are really serious about pursuing your passion as a profession, there is one more categorization that you should be aware of—nurturing relationships and toxic relationships. Unfortunately, not many of us are careful when it comes to choosing our relationships and company. Tragically, some of your closest friends and family members can be the most toxic people you could ever meet. Just because we love them too much we never notice their destructive thought patterns, negative comments, unsolicited advice, and unnecessary criticism.

Nurturing People

They are the people who believe completely in your talent, abilities, and potential. Whenever you share your passion with them, they would encourage you to follow it and help you in every possible manner they can. Even if they do not have any money and resources, they would share an idea or an insight that could prove valuable to you. They are possibility thinkers, and believe that every problem is a potential opportunity to grow and learn.

Be proactive to surround yourself with positive, nurturing, and encouraging people—people who believe in you, encourage you to realize your passion, and applaud your success. During the initial days of my business, I deliberately tried to spend more time with the people who have always been very supportive of my dreams; and it is because of them that I now feel so confident about what

I do. I attended every major training programme available in the personal development world, and made friends with some of the most wonderful and positive people. One thumb rule to identify such people is that whenever you meet them, you would feel good about yourself and empowered about your passions.

Who are the people you think would “nurture” your ambition?

Toxic People

No matter how much we would like to think that some people in our lives are ambitious, caring, happy, healthy-minded, positive, and sane individuals, we often realize that it just isn't so. We all have a few toxic people in our lives in the form of friends, colleagues, or family members.

Every time you have an idea, these people tell you why you can't do it. As you achieve, they try to pull you down. If you fail initially, they are the first to scorn and laugh at you. There is no specific reason why they do that but their emotions of jealousy and insecurity could be a cause behind such behaviour; or it may be sheer ignorance. Until you reach the point in your self-development journey where you are so fortified that you no longer allow toxicity influence you negatively, avoid any sort of interaction with negative people. Better spend time alone or better with a book rather than spending time with such toxic people who drag you away from your goals through their habitual negative talks and acts.

Write down the names of all the people you presently know, and more importantly, spend time with. Shun all possible contact with the negative toxic people and try to maximize your contact with positive encouraging people. *This is not a desirable gimmick but an absolutely essential exercise that every individual serious about his goals should undertake.*

There are two types of people—anchors and motors. You want to lose the anchors and get with the motors because the motors are going

somewhere and they're having more fun. The anchors will just drag you down.

—Robert Wyland, world-renowned marine life artist

We Are an Average of People We Hang Out With

When I read the quote by Jim Rohn, “You are the average of five people you spend your time with,” I started observing myself and people around me to validate the truth in his words. To my surprise and amazement, I realized that it was one of the most accurate observations ever made on the effects of influence.

Your net income, body weight, stress levels, sense of humour, and communication skills are truly the average of people you choose to spend your time with. Hence, one of the fastest and sure-shot methods to change any of these results in your life is to examine and change your company. This is not being selfish; it is about self-interest. Mind you, I am not talking about extreme isolated examples wherein a person who weighs 150 kg spends time with a guy who weighs 75 kg. Moreover, the word company here means three or four people, not just one friend. I am sure if you check three or four more friends of the obese guy, you would realize that they too are overweight. Also by spending time we do not mean living in the same house or working at the same office; spending time means people you talk to the most or you enjoy their company the most.

A millionaire cannot stay a millionaire for long, if he spends time with four billionaires.

A stupid person cannot survive for long with a group of intelligent people unless he does something about his stupidity.

An obese person cannot enjoy his food and lethargic behaviour for too long in the presence of fit, healthy people.

In short, your results are the average of the results of the people you spend your time with; hence choose your company very carefully. Spend time with people who make you grow and challenge your limits, not the ones who push you into lethargy.

Twenty Years of Mastery in a Few Minutes of Careful Observation

Let us say that there is a chef who makes the best pancake in the world, and it took him 20 years of consistent practice to achieve that status. He has won numerous competitions in various parts of the world, wherein the competition jury unanimously liked his pancakes the most.

You want to learn how to make pancakes, but not even once in your life have you made any kind of cake. Let's assume you are in the kitchen with the world's best pancake-maker, with all the necessary ingredients like plain flour, eggs, pinch of salt, milk, butter, sugar, honey, lemon juice, oil, pans, and gas burners. You plan to make pancake by noticing how he makes them.

You observe his each and every movement and diligently use the ingredients in the exact same quantity. I have a question for you.

"If you have carefully observed each and every step of his, used the exact ingredients in equal quantity, and cooked it for the precise same duration, would your pancake taste different from the pancake made by him? Remember every step and every ingredient has been matched exactly."

You will answer, "No, there is no reason why my cake should be different than his if I have successfully matched all the steps and ingredients."

You are right. Even if he has 20 years of experience in making pancakes, you can replicate the recipe in a few minutes by careful observation and modelling. And if you keep that recipe with you, you would be able to repeat the same feat again and again.

And what I want to tell you is that you already have all the ingredients needed to pursue your passion successfully; all you need to learn is to model the masters. *Observe the best and do exactly how they do things, till the time you develop your original style.*

Yes, there are a few exceptions to this rule. There are certain skills that require a lot of practice and muscle memory. You cannot go to a gym and expect to do a 300 lb bench-press by simply

observing the bodybuilders of the gym. They have trained their muscles and brain for such strenuous workout over a number of years. You cannot expect to play a keyboard, guitar, or violin by merely observing the players of the instrument. You cannot fly an airplane by simply observing a pilot for a few minutes. Yet, you can drastically reduce the time it would take you to do a 300 lb bench-press, or to play any musical instrument, or flying an airplane by observing the best role models. You could perhaps save years, compared to an individual who does not study from or about the best role models.

Do not bother yourself with reinventing the wheel. Remember that there is nothing worse than spending years on learning something on your own that could have been learned in a few minutes with some coaching and observation.

If I have seen a little further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.

—Issac Newton

How I Started Success Monks

When I started my journey as an author, coach, and inspirational speaker, I prepared a list of 200 supersuccessful personal development authors, corporate trainers, coaches, and inspirational speakers in this world. I studied everything I could about them by:

- Reading books about them or written by them.
- Attending their training programmes and talks.
- Working with them on as many projects as I could.

I even worked for free on a few projects for some of them, observing and learning everything I could about the industry I was passionate about. Spending a day with these high-performers can be a more enlightening experience than undergoing years of formal education.

In a nutshell, there are thousands of people out there who share your passion and are very successful in making a career out of it. Abandon the “frog in the pond thinks it is the ocean” attitude, and learn everything you can about these successful people. The insights you gain will help you in living an exciting and fulfilling professional life.

Get a Coach, Teacher, or Mentor

Only the best have coaches; mediocre people are too busy to have one. When I ask my seminar participants how many of them have coaches for their professional success, I often draw blank stares from them. Two big mistakes that all of us make are—first, thinking that coaches do not exist for every profession; and second, believing that the only people who need coaches are sports stars or athletes.

Do you know?

- The world’s best cricketer has a coach.
- The world’s best football player has a coach.
- The best musicians and singers have teachers.
- The best business people have mentors.
- The best dancer has a teacher.
- The best tennis player has a coach.

“Who are the best five people to coach you in realizing your passion?”

If you want to make it big in your life, but think you cannot afford a coach, let me tell you that you cannot afford *not* to have a coach. Mediocre success can be accomplished without a mentor, but true excellence is impossible without expert guidance. Yes, having a coach is expensive in some cases, but it is certainly not as costly as not having one.

People Like to Teach, They Like to Share

One fear that most of us have is that successful people would not share their success secrets with us or might refuse to coach us. I do not deny the existence of a few such personalities, but what I am trying to tell you is that there are more than enough successful people who would be kind enough to help you in every step of your professional journey. A lot many times we assume that successful people are self-centric, which might not be the case.

I have no doubts that there is a tiny part in you which is philanthropist and God-like and thus wants to share passion, success, and joy with fellow human beings to improve the quality of their lives. Even if you are a superbusy doctor, business owner, or a top-notch corporate employee, when an illiterate child of your maid or driver approaches you saying that he wants to study, you would surely take out time to teach him personally or help him with his enrolment in a school. Won't you?

A single conversation with a wise man is better than 10 years of study.
—Chinese proverb

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- “You are the average of five people you spend your time with.” Never underestimate the power of influence.
- There are only two kinds of people—nurturing people and toxic people.
- Only the best have the coach; mediocre people are too busy to have one.

Self-Awareness

- Who are the people you spend maximum time with? How have they influenced you?
- Who are your role models when it comes to making your Passion into Profession? Have you read everything about them or tried to meet them?
- Do you attend training programmes or have you ever hired a coach to help you in your business or profession?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

The Skill Mastery Principle

The Skill Principle states that you can master any skill if you take enough shots at it. Mastery is the inevitable outcome of the Skill Principle.

Keep Doing It, a Ratio Will Appear

A few years ago, I conducted a training programme for a real estate organization, on the topic of team building. One of the participants happened to be the top selling agent of the company, and during the workshop lunch, he narrated a personal experience. During the 15 years of his selling career, he had sold more real estate than most of the agents in the country.

“I used to be one of the lousiest salesmen, when I started my selling career. There were so many times in my career when I contemplated getting out of selling as a profession. When I started, I absolutely did not have any selling skills like great communication, problem solving, well-mannered or courteous, not even the charm of a salesman.”

This sounded very interesting to me and I asked him, “Then how did you become one of the best and the highest real estate selling agent in your business?” (I am a big fan of success stories and perspectives.)

“I stumbled upon one of the simplest yet underleveraged principles of success called the ratio principle. The encounter was accidental and came in the form of a challenge, yet I consider it was the best thing that happened to me during my entire career.”

I was hooked to his story so much that I almost ignored the senior director of the company who was sitting next to me on the lunch table.

He continued, “As part of my first job, my task was to call up individuals and companies for appointments and then offer them the best real estate deals. In a day I made 10 calls but was hardly able to fix up a single appointment, and sometimes none on a given day. As you would have guessed it, during the first six months I barely made any deals, and my job was in jeopardy. My boss had already warned me quite a few times but I had not shown much improvement. Hence he clearly told me that I needed to show results within the next one month. I tried to give him the excuse that the market was bad and that people were not buying, but he did not subscribe to any of the excuses. On the contrary, he gave me the example of the best agent of our division who too made 10 calls every day, but always managed to get at least three appointments. He cracked one successful deal every day out of those three appointments. My boss bluntly asked me to crack more deals than the company’s best agent during the next month, or else I should look for another job.”

“So you had little choice?,” I quipped.

“You bet. The very thought of equalling his record sent shivers down my spine, forget about beating him in the competition. He was a very polished communicator and a suave gentleman; there was no way I could have developed those traits in a matter of 30 days, thanks to my countryside upbringing. Since I could not be as smart as he was, I decided to work hard. For the next 30 days, I came to the office at 7 a.m. instead of the usual 10 a.m., and during the next five hours, I would make about 100 cold calls for getting appointments. Gladly, my past record of getting one appointment

from 10 calls did not betray me, and by 12 noon I had a list of 10 appointments for the day ready with me. Out of the 10 appointments, I managed to crack two deals on my first day. Although I was exhausted by the end of the day, the taste of success after months transcended all my exhaustion. For the first time in my life I sold more than anyone else in the team, even though it took a lot of time to happen. During the next one month I worked, I cracked around 50 deals, and was awarded the best real estate agent award by our director.”

“So this was a classic case of numbers beating the skill?,” I interjected.

“Yes, you can say so, but what surprised me the most was what started happening after one month. I continued to make 100 calls every day, but now instead of 10 appointments, I started getting 15. I was getting better with the calls. The number did not just improve for the appointments, but also for the successful deals cracked—for every 15 appointments, I was cracking four deals. I was now getting better.”

“Amazing,” was the only word that came out of my mouth.

“It surely is. I have realized a universal truth behind mastery in any area. If you are willing to increase your number of attempts, you can master any skill or profession, and even beat your naturally gifted competition. The good part is that you do not have to continue this forever. After two or three years of practice, my skills improved so much that I now know how to get five appointments for every 10 calls that I make. I now know how to crack at least two successful deals out of every five appointments I have. I now teach the same principle to young salesmen of our company. I tell them to first identify their success ratio—mine was 1 to 10 when I started—and then simply tell them to increase the number of attempts. As they make the first 100 attempts, they are successful only 10 times, but magic starts to happen during the next 100 attempts. During the next 100, instead of being successful 10 times, they start being successful 15 times or even more. And if they

continue to do this, nobody can stop them from becoming the best in their industry.”

As we were getting up from lunch, I asked him another question, “So do you think skill principle always works?”

“I do not think; I believe. I have seen it produce stunning results for me. The reason why it works is because it takes away our fear, and makes us strive for perfection through repetition. You cannot fear what you have done hundreds of times, and nor can you stay stupid at it.” I thanked him for sharing his success story; it was indeed one of the best experiences I would remember forever.

I fear not the man who has practised 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practised one kick 10,000 times.

—Bruce Lee

Skills Take Time, Passion Makes the Process Enjoyable

The Skill Principle (or the ratio principle or the law of averages principle, call it whatever you want to call it) always works. It works not just in selling but in almost every kind of profession—business, sports, music, acting, dance, painting, so on and so forth. You may be blessed with natural talent in some area of your life, but unless you polish that talent with constant practice and attempts, you would not be able to derive any major benefit out of it. Skill mastery becomes easy in the things you love doing.

Men of Records Are Men of Patience

- He is the highest run-scorer in the game of cricket—both in test and one-day formats of the game.
- He has been the Man of the Match 62 times in one-day international matches and the Man of the Series 15 times.
- He has been the Man of the Match 13 times in test matches and the Man of the Series four times (out of them, twice in the Border–Gavaskar Trophy against Australia).

- On 24 February 2010, he broke the world record for the highest individual inning in one-day international cricket, and became the first male cricketer to score a double century in one-day cricket.
- He has the record for scoring 1,000 runs in one-day internationals in a calendar year, and has done it seven times—in 1994, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2003, and 2007.
- He has scored the maximum number of centuries in one-day internationals. He has scored 49 tons in his career; second-placed Australia's Ricky Ponting has just 30 tons to his name.

By now you must have already guessed that these are some of the records held by the greatest cricket legend of our times: Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar. He recently became the only batsman in the world to have scored one hundred centuries in international cricket format. It is rightly said, “Sachin does not chase records; records chase Sachin.” If you try to mention Sachin's batting records, you will soon realize that it is an endless job, simply because the man keeps coming up with a new record or achievement every time he steps on the cricket pitch to bat.

But what is the one thing that impresses me the most about the greatest batsman in the world?

Sachin Tendulkar got his first one-day international century after playing 78 matches and five years of international cricket. People were beginning to wonder whether he would ever get to the three-figure mark, but on 9 September 1994 he silenced all his critics with a masterly 110 against Australia. Since then he has never looked back. If there is one person on this planet who serves as the perfect example of the Skill Principle, it is Sachin. He was willing to wait till 78 matches before he got his first century. He plays for the love of the game; everything else comes automatically to him.

Dreams do come true. So, go out there and chase your dreams.

—Sachin Tendulkar

How many people in this world can do that? Not many. No wonder there is only one Sachin Tendulkar in this world. Are you willing to work on your skills for five years or make 78 attempts, before you get your first big achievement? Most people have been bitten by what I call the “instant gratification bug.”

Every Master, Once a Disaster

During my research assignments on the subject of success, I analysed the biographies and autobiographies of thousands of successful people, and I observed and concluded one thing—every master was once a disaster. People who now occupy the top 10 spots, once occupied the bottom 10 spots in their respective professions. What separates them from the people who never made it to the top is their dedication towards the mastery of skills required for that profession.

They identified the key skills required for success in their profession and then committed themselves to their mastery. We may not have a survey to back this up, yet we know that the top 10 per cent people in any industry earn more than 90 per cent of the total money earned in that industry. And yes, you guessed it right—they are the masters in their respective areas. They have spent enough time in polishing their key skills.

The top 10 per cent of the bankers make more money than the other 90 per cent of the bankers combined.

The top 10 per cent of the lawyers make more money than the other 90 per cent of the lawyers combined.

The top 10 per cent of the artists make more money than the other 90 per cent of the artists combined.

The top 10 per cent of the architects make more money than the other 90 per cent of the architects combined.

The top 10 per cent of the sportspersons make more money than the other 90 per cent of the sportspersons combined.

The top 10 per cent of the authors make more money than the other 90 per cent of the authors combined.

The top 10 per cent of the musicians make more money than the other 90 per cent of the musicians combined.

The top 10 per cent of the entrepreneurs make more money than the other 90 per cent of the entrepreneurs combined.

You can choose to be in the top 10 per cent in your profession, by mastering your skills. And the task of working hard becomes a delight because the task is your passion and you love doing it.

The Law of Averages Made Him a Millionaire

The Skill Mastery Principle is nothing but the law of average at work. The real benefits of the law start accruing when you are not afraid to make the amount of effort that is required in the beginning, till the time you discover your success ratio. Once you discover your success ratio, then it is just a matter of acceptance and repeating the efforts. You would automatically get better with time, since your fear would reduce and your understanding would improve with every attempt. I got another glimpse of the Skill Mastery Principle at work, when at an entrepreneurship workshop I ran into a pre-owned car dealer. He seemed pretty young and must have been in his early thirties.

We exchanged cards and started talking about the automobile sector in the country. I was really impressed with his knowledge of the sector. Later I asked him how the business was, and if recession or the slowdown had impacted his business as well. He said that for the past five years he had been doing good business and growing at a steady rate, despite the recession. With this, my curiosity boosted up and I couldn't but help asking him since when he had been doing business. He replied with a smile, "Five years." He then said that he followed the 60 per cent down payment thumb rule in his car business. His business has been profitable right from the very first day.

“We inspect around 150–200 cars every month, averaging 10 every working day. Once I am sure about the value and the condition, I make an offer to the owner. I offer to pay 60 per cent of the value calculated earlier as full and final payment. Most of the customers get annoyed because even they know the value of the car. But out of the 150 cars that my team and I inspect every month, we always manage to get 15–20 people who are in urgent need of money or are looking for a quick upgrade to their next car. They are always willing to sell it even at 60 per cent of the value. We then sell them to other customers at a 10 per cent discount on the value, clearing a good 30 per cent of the car value as profit.”

He soon plans to open a couple of pre-owned car dealerships in other metro cities of the country. He totally believes that this model would work everywhere. By 2014, he aims to inspect around 1,000 cars, to buy 100 cars every month; and sell those 100 cars at 30 per cent profit margin. I have no doubt that he will manage to reach his target because he has built his entire model around the law of averages; the same law which forms the core of the Skill Mastery Principle.

I know you’ve heard it a thousand times before. But it’s true—hard work pays off. If you want to be good, you have to practise, practise, and practise. If you don’t love something, then don’t do it.

—Ray Bradbury

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- When you repeat an action again and again, a ratio appears. If you practise more, the ratio improves.
- Every master was once a disaster. The people who now occupy the top 10 spots, once occupied the bottom 10 spots in their respective professions.

- You may be blessed with natural talent in some area of your life, but unless you polish that talent with constant practice and attempts, you will not be able to derive any major benefit out of it.

Self-Awareness

- What are the skills you need to succeed in your passion?
- How many times would you try to master a particular skill—once, twice, or until you master it?
- Do you have the patience to develop the skills necessary for success in the area of your passion?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

The Internal Communication Principle

The Internal Communication Principle states that the quality of your success—personal and professional—is a direct result of your internal communication patterns (ICPs). Your ICPs determine the meaning you associate to an event, the decision you make, the actions you take, and your communication with the external world.

A Million-Dollar Insight

One thing that I love about my work is the opportunity to meet hundreds of new people every month, spend time, and learn things from them. Just like a scientist who enters his laboratory to discover the behaviour of a microscopic particle, I go to work every time with the intent of gaining a new distinction about human psychology and organizational behaviour. The best part is that as a coach I get to work with diverse individuals ranging from: *A 12-year-old student to a 60-year elderly gentleman.*

Salaried professionals with salary income from 0.5 to 50 million rupees per annum.

Self-employed professionals—doctors, lawyers, dancers, accountants, financial experts, and brokers.

Solo proprietors running one-man shows to owners of companies with thousands of employees on their payrolls.

People with net worth from five million to five billion rupees.

Self-made millionaires to heirs of big, family businesses.

In coaching sessions lasting anywhere between 20 and 200 hours spread across a few months, the clients discuss their goals, challenges, and problems. While all of them faced same challenges relating to health, money, and relationships, and growth in all these three areas, they all communicated to themselves differently when it came to handling these challenges. Most of the people generally do well in one or two areas of life, but fail miserably in some other critical area of their lives. It is not uncommon to meet a millionaire who is doing very well financially and has great relationships, but his life is messed up when it comes to living a healthy life. Similarly, a salaried professional may be doing financially well and staying in great physical shape, but is a wreck when it comes to his personal relationships. An entrepreneur may be doing exceptionally well in his relationships but is struggling in matters of health and wealth.

The insight came when I realized that the individual who is doing well financially communicates to himself very differently than the individual who is barely earning enough. You would agree that Bill Gates talked and still talks to himself very differently in matters of wealth, than his classmates at Harvard who are not so rich. They started from the same place financially but ended up at different places because of their ICPs.

You might be tempted to say that it is obvious for a billionaire to talk to himself differently from a person who is not one, when it comes to matters of money, but nothing could be farther from the truth. The truth is that the only reason Bill Gates became a billionaire was that he talks to himself differently about money than most of his peers. Had he communicated to himself just like them, he would have been still working for some other organization.

After spending so much quality time and helping these people in meeting their goals, I would be a fool not to notice their communication patterns. By communication patterns I mean internal

communication, that is, thoughts, beliefs, and evaluations. The external communication patterns merely mirror your internal communication habits.

I realized:

A wealthy man talks to himself differently than any other individual who is broke, when it comes to matters concerning money.

A fit person talks to himself differently than his obese and overweight friend, when it comes to health and food habits.

A person with great relationships talks to himself very differently than an individual with poor relationships.

A person successfully growing in the areas of health, wealth, and relationship, talks to himself very differently about these areas than an individual facing stagnation in them.

I decoded these communication patterns of successful individuals who were doing exceptionally well in one or more areas of their life, and shared them with the clients who were not doing well or as per their expectations. The results were startling, and some of the coaching clients experienced immediate benefits, while many others reported a positive change. In addition to being a success coach, I am making a transition to becoming a success consultant—learning from the best and sharing with the rest. One person you would talk to more than anyone else in your life is you. The quality of your communication with yourself determines the quality of decisions and actions you would take, or fail to take, in life for the fulfilment of your passion. Many people communicate more effectively to themselves about their weekend plan than their life plans. No wonder that their unhappy lives are sprinkled with only a few happy weekends. Are you aware of your ICPs especially when it comes to your professional aspirations?

We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think.

—Buddha

Positive ICPs—A Necessity

“How many people present in this seminar do self-talking?” When I bombard my audience with this question, only 50 per cent of the hands are raised in approbation, while the other 50 per cent do not realize that we all engage ourselves in introspection, which is nothing but a form of self-talk. In fact they would have raised their hands if they had realized that in order to answer my question they had to talk to themselves. We may not be talking to ourselves vocally as we do with others; nevertheless we still talk to ourselves. Yes, it is very difficult to monitor each and every thought that runs through our minds during a day, but it is very much possible to be aware of one’s internal communication, innermost thoughts, and beliefs pertaining to our professional and personal goals. How do you evaluate opportunities and challenges when it comes to following your passion? Do you tell yourself to keep going or do you tell yourself to quit at the sight of the first failure? Positive introspection and encouraging self-communication help in the following three ways in your journey of Passion into Profession:

1. ***Keeping the Self-Concept Intact:*** When I quit my job to start my company, for the first four months I did not earn any money. I started teaching at a college for free, but was not sure if I would be paid anything in return. If you plan to pursue your passion as an employee, cash flows will not be a problem, but things are different when you start your own venture as a business owner or a self-employed professional. A person who has been drawing salary for a few years has a self-concept about his productivity, market worth, or value; hence when the cash inflow stops, his self-concept receives a jolt. Spending habits have to be controlled and standard of living has to be compromised. You hate being stingy, yet you have to be. It is during these tough days you need to positively reinforce to yourself that such difficult choices are

important for your future success and part of the small cost that you must pay to live your passion. If you fail to preserve your self-concept, you would soon be compelled to go back into the abyss of your earlier lifestyle and profession. Even if there is no money in your bank account, you must communicate with the confidence of a millionaire.

2. ***Fight Opposition and Strengthen Resolve:*** When you decide to pursue your passion by quitting your safe, secure job or running business, you would surely face a lot of opposition from people around you. There would be a few people who understand you and respect your decisions, but the majority of them would try to create impediments in your journey because they find your actions senseless. Sometimes your own parents, family members, or friends might try to dissuade you from chasing your passion. Your ICPs will determine if you would bow down to the pressure or stand up to the challenge of realizing your passion. You need to have a tortoise skin to fight the criticism that besets anyone who tries to accomplish the unconventional. I must admit that it takes a lot of positive internal communication to handle the sarcasm and disapproval of your near and dear ones.
3. ***Inspiring Yourself:*** Sometimes the only good things you hear about your passion are the things you say to yourself. You need to constantly affirm your vision to yourself, chew upon, and decide the best strategy to realize it. This is perhaps the most important function your internal communication can serve. You need to inspire yourself to start on your passion, to overcome obstacles on the way, and to stay at the top. If you fail at inspiring yourself, you would soon run out of steam, and then getting back to your comfort zone and sliding down to the pit of your monotonous life would be just a matter of time.

What Is Your ICP?

The ICP is your personal evaluation or information processing system. It is the way you evaluate events or happenings in your life, and then communicate them to yourself. The external communication that takes place through verbal and body language is merely a reflection of the same.

We human beings focus on a challenge, opportunity, or proposal, by evaluating them. We need to realize that we are constantly asking and answering questions in our mind. See, just as you read the previous line, you asked yourself, “Is it true? Am I asking questions to myself constantly?” and irrespective of the answer, you raised a question to yourself. Human brain has to constantly evaluate things and the environment for the survival of the human species; and evaluation is nothing but a set of questions that we habitually ask ourselves. So if we want to change the quality of our lives, we should change our habitual questions. These questions channelize our focus towards how we think and feel. We evaluate anything by asking a series of questions. What we focus upon or what we choose to ignore is determined by the questions we ask. Two people in similar circumstances will ask different questions to themselves; and as a result will get different answers in their lives. I realized that the core differentiating factor between the people who are successfully living their passion and those who are not, is that the passionate people evaluate the events that occur in their life by asking better questions, and as a result, they get better answers. They try to reach out to their soul, that is, their true self, by introspecting and interrogating themselves. Questions are the steering wheel that will either take you closer or farther from your destination. The core message of the ICP is that real change always begins with a directional change in thinking—and more specifically, change in the quality of questions we ask ourselves.

Taking a Decision and Acting on Your Dreams

When it comes to living our passion, a lot many of us procrastinate. I know that because I did that for four years, before I could follow my real passion for human capital development. Why do you think so many people do that? It is simple. They do not communicate to themselves seriously about it. Folks, let me tell you one thing about your passion—you will never be able to convince yourself to take the first step towards it unless it becomes an absolute top-notch priority and a “must” for you. During the first three years of my job life, it was “ok” for me not to follow my dreams, but then during the fourth year I started communicating to myself about my passions much more seriously. I had to increase my inspiration for what I wanted to do and desperation for what I was doing. In life you need inspiration or desperation to start; wake up to either one of these life-changing forces. As members of middle-class and upper-middle-class groups, our lives are pretty comfortable. We do not experience the emotions of frustration or inspiration in our regular environment. Hence the onus lies on us to create these powerful life-changing feelings in our lives. This might sound insane, but you can deliberately feel frustrated about your existing environment by changing the way you talk to yourself. Likewise you can also experience the pull of the inspiration in your life. When it comes to following your passion, you cannot talk to yourself in a manner that you have an entire life in front of you to achieve it. You need to decide and take charge of your life, and your self-conversations play a crucial role in your decision.

Responding to an Event

When you fail at the first attempt in living your passion, how do you communicate to yourself? Do you doubt your strengths and potential or do you resolve to get back? All this is determined by the meaning you attach to various events that occur in your life.

The meaning you choose would either empower you to live your passion or weaken you.

It took me perhaps years to fathom the depth and the real meaning of the following statement made by William James, the father of American psychology—“*Human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes of mind.*” All the things that have ever happened to you in your life because of your own choices, and all the things ever said or done to you by others, mean nothing unless you attach a “meaning” to these events or happenings. The meaning you attach to them determines the decisions you would make or unmake, and the set of actions you would take or do not take. This meaning, once attached, will control you for the rest of the time, unless you become aware of it and decide to change it.

Accept it or not, this process of attaching “meaning” or “interpreting” things or events cannot be switched off or shut down. It has been on right from the time you were born and will continue till your last breath. Most people perform this function of attaching meaning to things or events unconsciously, based upon their own evaluation system. However, it greatly helps in making better choices if you perform this task consciously, understanding the full implications of the meaning you are about to associate with the event. I always suggest to my workshop participants that they attach an empowering meaning to an event, because it will determine the quality of action you would take or the suffering you would experience.

The event could be anything—a business screw up, a professional relationship gone sour, or the loss of a job. You have the choice to either label yourself as a “loser” because of these events or a “winner” who learns so much from these real-life experiences. Whatever label you choose, it will decide your next course of action, and hence the results.

Whenever you are faced with any challenging circumstances or events in life the following questions would help you:

- What are the five empowering and five disempowering meanings that you can attach to an event?
- Why should you choose the empowering meaning?
- Why should you not choose the disempowering meaning?
- Which is the most empowering meaning that you can associate to the event?
- What can you learn from this event to get better in future?

Every waking moment we talk to ourselves about the things we experience. Our self-talk, the thoughts we communicate to ourselves, in turn control the way we feel and act.

—John Lembo

Questions Will Set You Free

I have never stopped marvelling at the power of asking the quality question and how it sets us free. Sometimes all of us waste our lives by asking the questions that keep us in the prison of our own making, never realizing that we are just a question away from living a life of freedom—a life of our dreams.

Questions are like our ingrained beliefs—either they help us or they weaken us. An individual's thought process is nothing but a framework within which he asks a series of questions to himself about the happenings in his life or about other individuals. Our thoughts lead to our feelings, which then lead to our actions, and our actions determine the results we get in our personal and professional lives. And since our thoughts are nothing but the questions or evaluations that we make on a regular basis, the quality of the results in our personal and professional lives is directly related to the quality of questions we ask ourselves. I cannot possibly over-stress the importance of asking “Quality Questions.” Awareness precedes change. Hence before you begin to ask quality questions to yourself it is imperative that you become aware of the questions you already ask yourself.

Is It the Right Time to Quit My Job?

As you must have realized by now, your ICPs are nothing but the way your brain processes information and events. They help you in taking immediate action or postponing some decisions, depending upon what meaning you link to the event.

When I was working in a company, a colleague of mine was also very keen to start a business similar to mine. He had all the plans chalked out and it was evident that he had done more research than I had done on the topic. But when the actual time came to make a decision, stand on his feet, and execute his business plan, he said that would like to wait for a couple of more years before he took the plunge. According to him, the economy was still recovering from a recession, and companies were not spending enough on their learning and development initiatives. He even advised me the same.

For me things were different. I was driven by a strange sense of urgency to follow my passion and there was no way I could have waited for another couple of years to propel my journey of my dreams. Yes, initially I did face some difficulties but I guess that happens during the initial days of any business. It has been seven years now since he first showed me his business plan and he is still waiting for his perfect launch. I do not see any difference between us other than the fact that when it came to passion, our ICPs were poles apart. We might be chasing similar passions, but our execution strategies were totally different based upon our innermost thoughts.

While he asked himself, “What would be the best time for me to follow my passion?” I asked myself, “How can I follow my passion right now, and make the best use of the recession time?”

How Do You Talk to Yourself When It Comes to Your Love List?

Whether it is school admission, college examinations, job interview, business proposal, or marriage proposal, you will always be

required to ask or answer a few questions. What most people do not realize is that their external communication is just a reflection of their internal communication.

Inquisitive people who are not ashamed to ask questions invariably wind up knowing more, and there is a high degree of correlation between knowledge and the ability to make good decisions. There is also a high degree of correlation between people who have the information and people who succeed.

—Michael Bloomberg, founder and CEO, Bloomberg LP

The Empowering Question Framework

One thing I have realized is that there are always some questions that individuals and companies are not willing to ask themselves. The art and skill of asking questions can benefit everyone, from the chairman of the largest corporate conglomerate to a primary-school student.

Every year I conduct lots of sessions on the theme of entrepreneurship. One of the most popular talks that I deliver is titled “The Psychology of an Entrepreneur.” I believe that this talk became popular because of its simplicity and the connection that the audience feels with the content of the talk. If you ever happen to be one of the attendees, you would realize that the talk is nothing more than a series of questions that I pose to the audience. When I began my journey as an entrepreneur, I found a particular question framework very useful, enriching, and empowering, for gaining clarity and making the right moves. The framework contains a set of questions that begin with basic words like what, why, when, where, who, and how. I call it the “5WH Framework”

1. ***The “What” question:*** This question helps in identifying the target, since you should know what is it that you want. What is that I want to do? What is that I want to become?

What is that I want to own? What are my passions? What are the various professions related to my passions? What is that I wish to be remembered for? What is that I am best at?

2. **The “Why” Question:** After you have defined your “what,” now it is time to find the “why” behind it. As mentioned, your “why” is very important since it gives you the real sense of satisfaction and fulfilment from which you draw strength. Unless you have a strong why behind pursuing your passion, you would simply give up. Why do I want what I want? Why would I never give up? Why is it that I want to live my passion? Why would I be successful? Why do I deserve what I want? Why am I bigger and stronger than any challenge I would face?
3. **The “When” Question:** The “when” question basically helps you in deciding and planning your course of action. When do you want to start—after one year, two years, or five years? Do you start directly as a business owner or only after a few years of experience in your field?
4. **The “Where” Question:** The “where” question gives you an idea about the external circumstances and geographical trends, and your strategy changes accordingly. Where do I want to start my venture?
5. **The “Who” Question:** It helps you in identifying your role models, your competitors, and your customers. Who are the top 10 people in your profession or in your market? Who are the people you can learn from? Who are your present or potential competitors? Who are your customers or clients? Who can be your potential customers? Who are the people you need to partner with? Who are your vendors, suppliers, and distributors?
6. **The “How” Question:** After knowing your exact goal and the deadline by which you plan to reach it, you need to develop a strategy around the same. How are you going to

start—as a business owner, self-employed, or an employee? How would you develop the requisite skills? How would you raise the resources? How do you plan to handle the uncertainty?

Try to answer these questions on a piece of paper, and I can bet that by the time you are done you would have gained a lot of clarity on your professional journey.

The simplest questions are the most profound. Where were you born? Where is your home? Where are you going? What are you doing? Think about these once in a while and watch your answers change.

—Richard Bach

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- The quality of your success—personal and professional—is a direct result of your ICPs. Your ICPs determine the meaning you associate to an event, the decision you make, the actions you take, and your communication with the external world.
- There are always a few questions that individuals and companies are not willing to ask themselves. These questions hold the key to the future they have been aspiring for.
- Your questions determine your focus and hence the quality of actions that you would take.

Self-Awareness

- How do you talk to yourself—passionately or casually, enthusiastically or lethargically?
- What would happen if you accomplish your passion in life?

- What would happen if you continue doing things the way you do them?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

The Failure Principle

The Failure Principle states that success does not come when you do not fail; on the contrary it comes only after you have failed enough. The only people who never fail are the people who do not accomplish anything worthwhile.

The “Banana” Dreams

A group of scientists once placed four monkeys in a room that had a tall pole in the centre. Suspended from the top of that pole was a bunch of bananas. The room also had cold water sprayers fitted right near the pole.

One of the hungry monkeys started climbing the pole to get something to eat, but just as he reached out to grab a banana, he was doused with a torrent of cold water. Squealing, he scampered down the pole and abandoned his attempt to get the bananas. Each monkey made a similar attempt, and each one was drenched with cold water. After making several attempts, they finally gave up on their goal of getting the bananas.

Then the researchers removed one of the monkeys from the room and replaced him with a new monkey. As the newcomer began to climb the pole, the other three grabbed him and pulled him down to the ground. After trying to climb the pole several

times and being dragged down by the others, he finally gave up and never attempted to climb the pole again.

The researchers replaced the original monkeys, one by one, with new ones, and each time a new monkey was brought in, he would be dragged down by the others before he could reach the bananas. In time, only monkeys who had never received a cold shower were in the room, but none of them would climb the pole. They prevented one another from climbing, but none of them knew why.

Too Afraid to Fail? Stop Being a Monkey

When I read about this experiment, I realized how similar we human beings are to the caged monkeys of the experiment. We give up so many of dreams without even taking a single shot at them, and we dissuade others who try to do so. We have an opinion about everything, even if we have not experienced it ourselves. What amazes me is that we already know if we would fail or succeed at something without even trying it. We act like the monkeys who never aim for the bananas, fearing the beating we would get; to top it, we discourage and pull down others who try to climb up the ladder of entrepreneurship and passion.

Why Are We Scared of Failures?

Failure is viewed as a stigma in today's world, because of which people go to any extent to avoid them. What do you think are the evil consequences of man's quest to avoid failure? It results in the death of initiative and human enterprise. It kills the possibilities of living a dream life and stops us from utilizing the immense potential lying dormant within each one of us.

This question always intrigued me—why are we so scared of failing, even though we know that we cannot achieve anything substantial without failing a few times? Why do we foolishly play

small in our life so that we never face failures in our attempts to make it big, and thus failing in the worst manner possible? I started researching and delving more to understand human psychology in relationship to the phenomenon called “failure.” Why does it evoke a sense of fear, permanence, and suffering, in the minds of human beings? Guess what, it all again boiled down to our education system.

Think about it. We studied more than 200 subjects during our 18–20 years of formal education. How did the system determine if we learned the subjects well? It did so by grading (sounds like grinding) us in the examinations, right? After spending six months to a year learning (precisely, mugging up) a few subjects, we were tested by examiners through a set of question papers. Based upon the ratio of our right to wrong answers we were granted a passing or failing grade in those exams.

Parents and teachers expected only the best and the highest marks out of us, and anything less than that was frowned at.

It is constantly communicated that there is no place for average or mediocre students in this competitive professional world, and that failing is a cardinal sin. What a bunch of baloney coming from the conditioned minds of our society! Yes, it is not good to perform poorly or fail in subjects, but it is certainly not a cardinal sin. Most of the young minds during their formal education years are bombarded with the message that it is bad to make mistakes because mistakes lead to failure. No wonder we all are so afraid to make mistakes or fail in life. Yes, mistakes lead to failure but what is never taught to us is that there can be no success without mistakes. It may be undesirable to fail in academics but it is absolutely essential to fail in life a couple of times before you can succeed. The only people who never fail are the people who never tried anything, which in itself is the biggest failure.

Not failure, but low aim, is crime.

—James Russell Lowell

The Only Two Failures

When it comes to making a successful profession out of your passion, there are only two kinds of failures—the failure to take the first step and the failure to overcome the past setbacks.

The Failure to Start

Take a look at your Love List. If you think you would fail at making a profession out of your passion, remember it is only your assumption and an underestimation of your abilities. You have perhaps been conditioned by your past experiences or the negative opinions of the people around you. Millions of people give up on their passion without even taking a shot at them. How can you know whether you would fail or succeed in your dream career, without even trying?

One of the best things you can do for yourself is to unlearn the fear of failure you acquired at school or college. In school and college you were penalized for failing, but life never penalizes you for failing; on the contrary, it punishes you for not failing enough. Once you fail enough, success is just a matter of time. If you never took action on the things mentioned in your Love List, chances are high that you also let the fear of failure stop you from starting, and you followed the cattle-like crowd. Just like the replaced monkeys, you will never climb up the pole of success and will end up stopping others around you from doing the same.

The Failure to Overcome the Past

One of my coaching clients was a state-level, trained classical dancer. She had won several awards and dancing competitions during her 14 years as a dancer. She had been sincerely preparing for one of the biggest dancing competitions, which was just a few months away. During one of the qualifying events, she made a

wrong move on the stage and was rejected from the competition. She felt devastated and her self-esteem suffered a major blow. She felt she had failed her parents, family members, and friends. For the next few months, she did not participate in any dance competition, and when she joined back after the break she started making a lot of mistakes. As she was my coaching client, the onus was on me to work on her shaken belief system and eradicate the guilt of failing in the qualifying round. Over a period of time, her performance started improving and the following year she qualified for the big event. One thing I realized from this incident was that we—as parents, teachers, and mentors—are not teaching our kids how to handle failure and how to overcome it. Instead of viewing failure as an instruction mechanism, they have started viewing it as an obstruction. Failure is one of the most motivating forces if channeled positively, but that can only happen if we try to analyse the failure rather than letting it paralyze us. Your motto in life should be, “Because I failed I will do it again” rather than “Because I failed I will never do it again.”

The brick walls are there for a reason. The brick walls are not there to keep us out. The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something. The brick walls are there to stop the people who don't want it badly enough. They're there to stop the other people.

—Randy Pausch, *The Last Lecture*

All Failures Are Temporary, Only You Make Them Permanent

One of the fastest techniques to overcome failure is to understand that it is always temporary in nature unless you assign it the status of permanence by not overcoming it. How do you view your failures? Do you view them as isolated temporary impediments or do you perceive them as permanent lifelong verdicts?

Yes, you failed at cracking that sales deal today, but the only way your failure becomes permanent as a salesman is by never cracking a deal in future.

Yes, you failed at making your first business venture work today, but the only way your failure becomes permanent as an entrepreneur is by never starting a business again.

Yes, you failed at delivering that impressive talk today, but the only way your failure becomes permanent as a speaker is by never delivering a talk again in future.

Yes, you failed at living your dream today, but the only way your failure becomes permanent as a dreamer is by never trying to live your dream again in future.

No matter how hard or painful your fall has been, if you are willing to learn the lesson and are not afraid to make another attempt, success will never elude you. Whenever you fail at something, gather yourself up and ask this million-dollar question:

“What are the things I still need to know in order to succeed?”

All the winners have used this question in one way or the other to fight the various challenges that come in their way. Remember when somebody is succeeding continuously while you are failing, this does not mean that they are smarter than you. It simply means that they know something that is necessary for success but which you never bothered to learn. Learn it well and you can overcome any failure in your life.

Failure—The Source of Real Knowledge

During our educational years, more emphasis is laid on passing the exam, rather than learning the subject. Parents do not bother about how much their child is learning, as far as they are getting good grades. Do you know it is very much possible to pass with good grades without learning much about the subject? If you ever passed in subjects you never understood and still don't, you know what exactly I mean here.

So, how do we learn?

Yes, you guessed it right! We learn the most when we fail. How many attempts are you willing to make to master the skills necessary for succeeding in your dream career? People call Edison and many geniuses like him “self-taught” men, but I feel a better categorization would be “failure-taught” men. They all learned from their failures and hence became super successful in their individual fields. The peaks of success lie beyond the pits of failure, and unless you are willing to go down the pits you will never be able to climb the peaks.

The reason why so many fail in making a successful career and living a dream life despite the academic success, is because we merely passed the exams but never learned the lessons. We learn life-lessons only through failing. You only have to fail till the time you learn the lesson. The tragedy is that in the presence of fear of failure and the absence of ability to overcome failure, people continue to go down the rabbit hole of frustrated living.

There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.

—Colin Powell

Business Failure: You Were Carrying Someone Else's Baby

When I started my company Success Monks, I must admit I was scared. I was fearful because suddenly my mind was occupied with, in quite an unsolicited manner, the success rates and the failure rates of entrepreneurship. It is not that I had not analysed successful and failed businesses earlier. As an analyst with a management consulting company, my job had required me to study a lot of companies and prepare cases around their successes and failures. But it is one thing to analyse the performance of other companies to make recommendations, and altogether a different experience to figure out the probability of your own business's survival.

Yes, it true that only 1 out of 10 businesses survive and make it big in the long run.

Have you ever wondered why there is such a high mortality rate in business ventures? How can you escape from this entrepreneurial genocide? How can you be the 1 out of the 10 businesses that survives to make it big?

The answer again lies in the word called “passion.”

Your business should be your own baby, not the one you picked up from the street. Most people start a business just because they are too tired and frustrated with their present job. They are so keen to “get out” of what they are into, that they do not bother to delve into knowing more about what they are “getting into.” Businesses always have a gestation period before they become profitable, and with rising competition in all the industries it has become all the more challenging to grow at the desired pace. You need to be strongly committed and emotionally attached to your vision to take it through the difficult initial years.

When I explain this concept to my workshop participants, I ask the participants to visualize two women—a mother and a babysitter.

Character 1: A Mother

The first character of the case is a mother. A mother gives birth to a child, after keeping the baby in her womb for nine months. During this period she happily bears a large amount of stress, muscle aches, and a sore back. The back pain is sometimes comparable to carrying tons of bricks. Varicose veins are formed due to the extra weight and pressure on the body. Shortness of breath, swollen ankles, and haemorrhoids are also some of the common occurrences during a pregnancy. Then, delivering the baby is itself some task and it is said that labour pain is one of the toughest forms of pain which a person could ever experience.

After the baby is born, the mother does everything from feeding to caring of the child. We all know how difficult the first few years are for any mother. She makes sure that the baby receives all the necessary vaccination, and a nurturing environment so that the child can grow into a healthy adult. If you find this too tough to imagine, just think of all the tough things your mother did happily for you.

Character 2: A Babysitter

The second character in the case is a babysitter. A babysitter usually watches a family's children for a few hours while the parents are away from the house. As babysitters, they provide a meal or snack for the children and find ways to entertain or engage the baby. They are also responsible for following through with the family's bedtime routine. Babies can be tough to handle, especially when the mother is not present. A babysitter expects a pay for her work.

The Situation

Imagine if things go hard, there is a financial crunch, and there is not enough money for the babysitter's pay. Do you think the babysitter would continue the job or leave? Now let's put a mother in the same situation. Yes, a mother does not get a pay to bring up a baby, but if during tough times, when even survival is a challenge, do you think the mother would be selfish enough to ignore her own child? If there is food just for one in the kitchen, who do you think a mother would feed—the baby or herself? Who do you think the babysitter would feed?

Most of the people who start a business are just babysitters. They started a business because the industry looked lucrative. They did not experience the labour pains of delivering the baby called “business” and they are unwilling to undergo the challenges that come during the initial four or five years of running a business. *We all*

know that challenges do come up during the first four to five years of running a business. Your patience is tested, your assumptions are proven wrong by the market, and things do get tough. It takes the love and patience of a mother to steer through such uncertain times, while a babysitter just quits.

This is precisely the reason why 9 out of every 10 businesses shut during the first few years of operation. The question to be asked while starting a business is not whether the economy is good, or how great is the business idea; the million-dollar question that should be asked is who is the entrepreneur—is he a mother or is he a babysitter? If an entrepreneur feels the same way about his business as a mother feels for her child, he would navigate every storm, and leverage every resource till his last breath to make sure that the business survives and grows into a successful venture. A babysitter, on the other hand, would just quit.

Do you have a business idea? Yes, that's great. Now just ask who are you—a mother or a babysitter?

Every great work, every big accomplishment, has been brought into manifestation through holding to the vision, and often just before the big achievement, comes apparent failure and discouragement.

—Florence Scovel Shinn

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- Success does not come when you do not fail; on the contrary, it comes only after you have failed enough. The only people who never fail are the people who do not accomplish anything worthwhile.
- There are only two types of failures—the failure to start and the failure to overcome the past.
- Every failure is a motive failure. Find “why” you want to succeed.

Self-Awareness

- Is it actual failure or merely the fear of failure that has stopped you from taking action on your Love List?
- How many times are you willing to fail before you give up on your dreams?
- Why do you want to make a successful profession out of your passion?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

The Money Principle

The Money Principle states that the amount of money you make is dependent upon the value you bring to the market and not merely the number of hours you work. Also, the upper limit on the amount of money earned from any profession is determined by the form in which it is pursued—as business owner, a self-employed professional, or an employee.

The Per Hour Wage Rate

During the four years of my job, I never once checked my salary statement. Like most of us, I was brought up with the philosophy that when the company you are working for is good, do not give a lot of importance to money. But now, I no longer subscribe to this philosophy, because I realized that this philosophy should be followed only if you are blindly and hopelessly in love with your work, else working in a low-paid job that does not fulfil you, can adversely impact your self-worth. The most important lesson I learned was that money was a factor of value and not time.

One day, sitting at my office desk, I got an email from the accounts department with the following words mentioned in the subject line: “Salary Slip.” All the employees of the organization got these monthly mailers to keep them aware about the tax and the salary computation. I almost ignored the mail and continued

with my work; something I had been doing for the past four years of my job life. However, within two minutes, I got another mail which had a subject line—“Fill in your work-hours for the fortnight.” The company that I worked for expected the employees to fill in their monthly hours in the system; the hours were then billed to the clients depending upon the project we were worked on.

A weird and random idea rushed through my mind to map my monthly salary with the number of hours I worked in a month. Have you ever tried to do that? If not, I suggest you do that at least once, for your enlightenment. The insights that you would gain from this exercise are truly amazing and somewhat priceless. On an average, I was spending 10–12 hours in office, five days a week. In addition to this, I also spent two or three hours commuting to office every day. If I take the average time spent on office-related work to be 12 hours per day, I was spending 60 hours per week, or 240 hours per month in my employment.

I then opened my salary statement and the amount that reflected was approximately ₹48,000 for that particular month. I then divided this amount by 240 to calculate the per hour wage rate, and the amount came to be ₹200 per hour. A sense of embarrassment rolled down my spine; after four years of hard work, I was worth only ₹200 per hour. You might say I am making a mountain out of a mole by exaggerating the problem, but the truth is that sometimes we need to analyse things from different perspectives to reach a decision in our lives. Four years of hard work, and more than that my life's irreversible and irrecoverable time—and all I was worth was ₹200 per hour. I sat in my team cubicle and started observing the team members who were seated on the same floor. Human imagination is very strange. It bombards your fragile mind with things that are not visible and least expected. To my surprise, instead of the faces of my wonderful colleagues, all I could see was their per hour wage rates. Blame my random imagination; I was stupefied and began hallucinating sitting in my office.

I saw a ₹100 per hour signboard in place of the face of a colleague who had joined a few days back.

I saw a ₹150 per hour signboard in place of the face of a colleague who had joined two years back.

I saw a ₹200 per hour signboard in place of the face of a colleague who had joined the organization with me.

I saw a ₹400 per hour signboard in place of the face of a colleague who had joined two years prior to my joining date.

I saw a ₹800 per hour signboard in place of the face of my team leader, who had been with the organization for eight or nine years.

Lastly, I saw a very senior colleague with his laptop, taking occasional sips from a cup of coffee, and in place of his face, all that I could see was a ₹1,500 per hour signboard.

As I mentioned, our imagination is strange. Like a naughty and wild child, it goes to places least expected. My mind now showed to me my entire journey of four years encapsulated, and the future career graph for the next eight years with the same organization. Suddenly a few questions flashed on the screen of my mind.

What am I really worth? Was I worth just ₹200 per hour? The number surely actually messed up with my feeling of self-concept and dented it. Yes, I was never driven by money, but there is nothing worse than compromising on both passion and money. I was working for long hours but I was mistaking movement for achievement. *What is your self-concept when it comes to the per hour wage rate?*

Is this the path I want to follow? Would scaling the career graph laid out for me for the next 8–10 years, which I could clearly anticipate, make me feel fulfilled? Even if it were a different organization, the career graph would have been somewhat the same, although I might have reduced the journey by a couple of years. It was not a question related to time taken for the journey; it was a matter of loving the destination. *I realized that the organization was not responsible for how much I earn—I was responsible for how much I earned and will ever earn.*

It was indeed an inexplicable feeling that daunted every cell of my body—when an unexpected introspection results in an epiphany. *I was in no mood to blame anyone except myself for the situation I found myself in. Two things that I wanted to change, and change very fast, were the per hour wage rate and my future career graph.* I intensified my study efforts around the subject of money, and also how to make my dream profession a source of it. The fascinating results that followed were possible only because of the proper understanding and implementation of the Money Principle.

What is your per hour wage rate? And what does your career graph look like?

It is a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best you very often get it.

—W. Somerset Maugham

Your Financial Thermostat

Do you know that every individual has a preset range for the amount of money they think they can earn in a month or a year? The best thing you can do to yourself is to identify the limit and then try to go beyond it as often as you can. The upper limit is generally determined by your vision and self-belief, while the lower range is related more to your present income.

I make my “Wealth Mastery” workshop participants write down their dream income on a piece of paper—the amount that they think they can earn per month if there were absolutely no limitations.

Do you think all of them write the same numbers?

No, they are always different. I get a variety of responses ranging from ₹200,000—through 1 million, 2 million, and 5 million—to ₹50 million per month, and sometimes even without any specific upper limit. But I mentioned these numbers since they are the ones that pop up most often in the lists. The amount of dream

income, by the way, has no correlation with the amount of money they make, but everything to do with what they think is possible for them to earn. However, when I make them write how much minimum income they would earn in case they were fired from their jobs, they all quote a number which is around their present levels of income. *Human beings feel very restless if they operate below their minimum financial limits and undeserving if they operate above their expectations. Accept it or not, you are used to earning the amount you are earning and at the same time used to not earning the money you are not earning.*

You have a blueprint for the amount of money you feel comfortable with, and you take professional decisions based upon the range unconsciously or intentionally selected in your blueprint. You already know that a thermostat is a component of a control system which senses the temperature of a system so that the system's temperature is maintained near a desired and set point. The thermostat does this by switching the heating or cooling devices on or off, or regulating the flow of a heat transfer fluid as needed, to maintain the correct temperature. What you are not aware of is that your money philosophy serves as your financial thermostat. It switches on your imagination, initiative, and enterprise controls, when you are falling short of your minimum financial expectations, and likewise turns them off if you exceed your upper limit of expectations.

It is correctly said that you may surprise the world with your wealth, but you would never surprise yourself in the true sense of the word.

I always knew I was going to be rich. I don't think I ever doubted it for a minute.

—Warren Buffett

How much do you think you will earn during the next 5, 10, or 25 years? Only you can decide this amount for yourself, and you

even might disappoint yourself if you do not get it; but if you do, it will never surprise you. You have to become a millionaire in your mind before you can actually have a million in the physical world. Your self-worth determines your net worth.

This is precisely the reason why if a salesman is used to meeting a specified number of targets every year, he would meet them despite the conditions of recession, but if he is used to only meeting the targets he would not make any attempt to go beyond them once he reaches them, even if the business is growing.

It also explains why lottery winners don't necessarily end up rich. Many end up bankrupt or broke within a short period of time. In an article published in *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, researchers found that more than 1,900 Florida lottery winners went bankrupt within five years, suggesting that lottery players were twice as likely to file for bankruptcy as the general population. Wealth truly is what you become, not what you get or have.

If you ever find yourself indulging in some self-sabotage behaviour like blowing an interview that you thought would be easy, missing a sure-shot business order, or making a careless yet expensive professional mistake, you can directly link it to your money blueprint or your financial thermostat settings.

Then Came the Results

Once I became aware of my money blueprint, I decide to change it. One of the fastest ways to do that is to meet successful people in your desired profession, and if you cannot meet them, read everything that is available about them in books, reports, interviews, and the media. Following this strategy, I was able to raise my per hour wage rate over 50 times and it is rising regularly. I am the one who decides my value in the marketplace and you can do the same. It did not happen overnight. In fact, after quitting my ₹200-per-hour job, I did not earn a single penny for the next four months.

After four months of continuous effort I got a teaching assignment in a college at ₹500 per hour, and during the next six months more contracts came in for keynote speeches at ₹4,000 per hour, which was 20 times the money I made during my job days. I had learned a valuable lesson—it is important to challenge your financial limits. Had I not believed in myself and the possibility to earn more, I would have still been struggling at ₹400 per hour. I had to expand my reality and my possibility quotient, and any person who looks for exponential increase in his money income faces the same challenge. It is easy to get a 10 per cent yearly hike and a 25–30 per cent bonus on your base salary if the economic conditions are good, but if you want anything more you'd better learn how to change your money blueprint.

What I learned about money from the supersuccessful and the ultrarich people is that the amount of money you make is most determined by the value you bring to the marketplace. Only poor and middle-class people let their income be determined by the number of hours they work. Yes, there are no guarantees and you have to work really hard to make yourself valuable in the market. Do you think I would have earned 50 times more than what I used to earn during my job days, without providing value to the marketplace? And do you think I can constantly increase it like I presently do? I learned to work hard on myself and the market started valuing me accordingly. You might also argue that it is not possible to increase your income in all professions but I would rather differ on this viewpoint. You name the industry and I can tell you confidently that the top 20 per cent of the people earn more than 80 per cent of the money in that industry. And yes, these people focus on the value they bring to the marketplace, while others are busy waiting for the clock to strike 5:00 p.m. And it is easy to stay in your office after 5:00 p.m. only if you are doing what you love most.

Money is usually attracted, not pursued.

—Jim Rohn

What's Your "Money Philosophy"?

As mentioned in the previous chapters, barring a few insufficient and indirect mentions, the three most important subjects necessary for living a successful life were never taught to us during our formal education years—health, relationships, and money. No wonder billions of people struggle in these core areas of life. Since this is a book related to professional success, we focus on the subject of “money.” I think when it comes to the subject of money, most of us are illiterates or highly uneducated.

Whenever we are not taught something, we tend to develop beliefs, untested assumptions, and hypotheses related to it, and this is exactly what happens with the subject called “money.” These beliefs, untested assumptions, and hypotheses form what I call our “money philosophy.”

I think I have already made it clear that a subject titled “Money” was never taught to us during our formal education. *Teaching somebody subjects like wealth management and financial management without teaching them anything about wealth creation, is like teaching someone how to manage babies without teaching them how to make babies.*

It was George Bernard Shaw who said, “Poverty is the biggest sin,” and I think not just poverty but even mediocrity is a sin. You will anyway work for 40 years; why not work to get rich by pursuing your passion? Before you plan your journey, you must know a few things about the subject of money, so that you can align yourself with the great riches that could be yours. These basic, yet not commonly practised, concepts about money determine where you would end up—as rich, middle class or poor—during or after your professional career.

“Money Is Not Important”—The Lie that Keeps You Broke

Any person who says that money is not important will lie about other things as well. In fact, if a person says that money is not

important he is killing his chances of attaining any future wealth that could have come his way. You can start following your passion without any money. You may even be without it during the initial years, but if in the long run your passion is not making you enough money, you are not doing it right. As a thumb rule, always follow your passion and do it so well that you attract money rather than pursuing it.

It is really hypocritical of a parent to tell his child that he never gave importance to money, and yet every week spend 50–60 hours at office to earn money and not spend even five hours with his child. Your objective should be to earn as much as possible by following your passion, and raise yourself above the two biggest problems a middle-class or poor man faces—work stress and bills.

There is another category of passionate individuals for whom I feel sorry. They leave their safe, secure jobs to follow their heart but when they do not succeed commercially they start justifying their actions with phrases like, “I was never interested in money” or “There is no money in my industry.” For God’s sake, if you are following your passion, get interested in money; it will help you in expanding your vision and touch many more lives than you would otherwise do in its absence. Also, as long as there is someone successful and rich in your industry, do not ever say that there is no money in your profession.

Money isn’t the most important thing in life, but it’s reasonably close to oxygen on the “got to have it” scale.

—Zig Ziglar

Get Paid for Results—Never Mistake Activity for Productivity

One of the worst damages done by the majority of corporate jobs is the tradition of fixed income. I know you hate me for saying this since you have been brought up with the notion that variable income is for obnoxious, door-to-door salesmen and not well-educated professionals like you. Everybody loves certainty and

secure income, but not many realize that the blessing of consistent income does not come alone; usually it is accompanied by a curse called “ceiling on your income.” When you choose to get paid on the basis of the time you spend in your profession, you are putting a limit on your income. The difference between the most productive and the most inefficient employees is reflected only in the year-end bonus or a six-month difference in promotion dates. People like to do business with people who are result oriented, not with those who do not expect their efforts to bear results.

Most people work just hard enough not to get fired and get paid just enough money not to quit.

—George Carlin

Is Too Much Money the Cause of All Problems?

Drop this financially suicidal thought like you would drop a hot potato. I do not know where the word “stinking rich” came from but I know one thing for sure—the rich do not stink; it’s the poor and the middle-class people that stink the most. Contrary to the popular notion that “too much money is the root of all evil,” the truth is that the lack of money is the root of all evil. Money is simply a magnifier; it merely makes you more of what you already are. The best thing you can do for the poor and the middle-class people in this world is to not be one of them. Become as rich as you can and help them in doing the same. The only advice is to follow your passion and do only the things that the law permits. Your millions would not be worth anything if the process of acquiring them makes you miserable or requires you to be an outlaw.

Yes, there are a few rich nitwits who are always in the news for the wrong reasons, but they form only a minuscule percentage of the people who indulge in such destructive behaviour. You may find it tough to believe but the truth is that most of the rich people are honest and kind. Recently, as part of the “Giving Pledge,” 38 US billionaires pledged at least 50 per cent of their wealth to

charity through a campaign started by investor Warren Buffet and Microsoft founder Bill Gates. Do you think a middle-class or poor man could ever mobilize such resources and have such an impact on humanity? Also, I wonder how effective the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation would have been without the monetary contribution of Bill Gates and countless other billionaire philanthropists who support it through their wealth and network. Aspire to be rich and then use your wealth to help others as much as you can. Apart from giving you the opportunity to serve fellow humans, massive wealth also brings with it a lot of freedom. Too much money is a wonderful opportunity to serve humanity.

There are people in the world so hungry that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.

—Mahatma Gandhi

Net Worth Is What You Keep, Not What You Earn

The super-rich focus on how much money they keep while the poor and the middle class think about how much money they earn every month. I have a friend who earns around ₹200,000 every month, yet he is always short of money. Why? Simple! Because he spends ₹200,000 to ₹225,000 every month. Taking expensive vacations, dining out every day, partying on weekends, and buying overhyped fashion accessories are a way of living for him. Even after six years in his high-paying job, he has no savings; in fact, he has a couple of personal loans on himself to continue his lavish lifestyle. On the other hand, I know another person who earns ₹50,000 per month yet manages to save more than 50 per cent of the money. He buys only the assets that appreciate and avoids splurging money on unnecessary things. He plans them very carefully and studies the best offers available before taking any major buying decisions. He saves a certain portion of his money and then spends what is left. My spendthrift friend spends as much as he can and then tries to save what is left; no wonder he always lands up

in debt. Who do you think will end up having a higher net worth after 10, 20, or 40 years of professional life?

Most people do not know the real definition of wealth or net worth. Your wealth is determined by how much money you keep rather than how much money you make. The world is full of bankrupt millionaires. If you make one million dollars every year and spend two million, you are certainly not wealthy. In fact, a time will soon come when you will even lose your ability to generate a million dollars. I read somewhere the definition of wealth: “The number of days/months/years you can survive at your existing life-style or living standard, without physically working.” So, if your monthly expenses are ₹100,000, and you just have ₹300,000 in your savings, your wealth is approximately three months. Wealth is measured in units of time, not currency. Most people are just five or six months away from bankruptcy if they stop working physically. Yet they think they are wealthy because they make a couple of hundreds of thousands per month in a job. Be intelligent with your money and wise with your spending habits.

If you buy things you do not need, soon you have to sell things you need.

—Warren Buffet

Active Income vs Passive Income

Let me define the two terms for you. Active income is the income for which services have been performed and it includes wages, tips, salaries, commissions, and income from business. It is the income you make by showing up for work at a place. If you do not show up for work, you cannot earn active income. Passive income is the income which is generated based upon work once done or an asset once acquired or created. *The income will be generated even if you are no longer working and it includes royalty from books, rentals, returns from investments, dividends, bank interests, and online selling.* The big business houses and investors generally have a lot of passive income.

They just need to have a few supervising and supporting mechanisms in place, and money automatically flows into their bank account. It's all about setting up any business that is systematized to work without you.

Employees and self-employed people on the other hand have active income constituting a major portion of their entire income. An engineer, accountant, doctor, or lawyer would have to show up for work at their offices to make money. If you want to know your passive income ask yourself, "How much money would come to my bank account or pocket automatically if I do not work for an entire year?" Unless you devise your career in such a way that you earn a lot of passive income, you cannot expect to be ultrarich.

Trading your time for money is one of the least effective strategies for getting wealthy because you can work for only a limited number of hours in a day. Every profession has got an opportunity to earn passive income; you just need to figure out a way by restructuring your operating model. The huge passive income that the rich make is strong evidence that the marketplace rewards value more than anything else. *It does not matter if you work 4 hours a week or 40 hours a week, the market rewards you on the basis of value you create for the society.*

Money Was Invented to Support Specialization

One of the biggest reasons why people do not follow their passion is because they are not sure whether their passion would make them money. Making money by doing any job or following any profession has become so important that people have forgotten why money was invented in the first place. We all know that prior to money, people used the barter system for trade.

The biggest problem in the barter exchange was the lack of a common measure of value, that is, there was no such commodity in lieu of which all commodities could be bought and sold. In such a situation, while facilitating the exchange of a commodity, its

value was to be expressed in terms of other commodities, such as 1 m of cloth is equal to 5 kg of potato. It was a very difficult proposition and made exchange virtually impossible. Now, with the discovery of money, this difficulty has been completely eliminated, for a common parameter for exchange was created, but people forgot that money was invented to support specialization. It was invented so that people could continue doing what they were best at. People produced goods and services that they specialized in and then sold them in exchange for money; the money received was used to acquire other things that they needed from other people. While we continue to use money for buying goods and services from others, we no longer generate money by focusing on what we are best at—our talents, skills, and passion.

He who wants to barter usually knows what is best for him.

—African proverb

The Paths to Passion—A Comparison

As mentioned, it is possible to pursue your passion as a business owner, self-employed professional, or an employee. However, there are certain advantages and disadvantages that naturally get accrued the moment you choose any one of these paths.

I wrote this book not just to inspire you to follow your passion, but also to empower you to choose the best strategy for its fruition. As you get ready to embark on your journey called Passion into Profession, there are certain things that you must know as a business owner, or as a self-employed professional, or as an employee of an organization. To explain to you the nuances of these three operating models and for the purpose of simplicity, we call a venture a business only if it has one or more employees in addition to the owner. If the owner is the only employee, he falls under the category of self-employed professional. The definition of employee would be an individual who works for an organization without owning any part of it.

Business Owner

When you pursue your passion as a business owner you have to create a system for serving clients with the help of your employees.

Advantages

- You can leverage two of the most powerful forces of generating wealth—the passive income and other people’s time. The choice and the responsibility of using these forces diligently lie in your hands.
- Profits are always better than wages. Total revenue less the total cost of doing business is your reward and there is no ceiling on the same.
- If you can build foolproof supervision, supporting, and check mechanisms for the efficient running of the business, it can run even in your absence. You can hire a trustworthy and competent chief executive officer for your company, go to Fiji for a couple of years’ vacation, and still make money from the business in your absence. The business’s existence is not dependent upon your existence.
- The richest people in this world are business owners; hence business is the only known route to massive wealth generation and value creation.

Limitations

- To manage a business system, you need to mobilize greater amount of resources, and enough funds to manage business costs and employees salary.
- You may not be required to know everything but you must know enough to manage your key people, finances, marketing, product development, pricing, and distribution.

- Generating constant growth is a big challenge and stagnation means the death of business.
- Earnings are fluctuating in nature and there is always an element of uncertainty around them.

Self-Employed Professional

You are the boss and you are the employee. “Solopreneur” is the term that is now popularly used to describe the self-employed professional.

Advantages

- You control every aspect of your venture, right from the vision of the business, to the day-to-day operations of the business—business development, finances, marketing, innovation, customer service, purchasing, and sourcing.
- You decide how many hours you would like to work and on what projects.
- You can generate passive income by offering your products and services in ways and places that do not require your presence.
- You can keep your venture costs to the minimum since you make all the spending decisions.
- There is a lot of creative satisfaction that one gets by managing everything; also you learn the most.
- All the profits from the business belong to you alone.

Limitations

- As a self-employed professional, you do not leverage the fastest route to wealth—other people’s time.
- The size of the business is limited by your vision and execution skills.

- You would be required to understand every aspect of business. Sometimes, self-employed people suffer from burn-outs because they have to handle everything themselves. It is very tough for one individual to know and manage everything.
- There is always uncertainty about earnings. Losses belong only to you.

Employee

You can also choose to follow your passion in the capacity of an employee by joining an organization that offers you a job profile you enjoy working on.

Advantages

- You have a consistent income.
- You would be required to work only on one or two things at a time, unlike a business owner or self-employed professional who have to handle, manage, and delegate so many things.
- You are expected to work only for a specified number of hours.
- You do not need any capital or resources as an employee; all you need is knowledge and skill.
- The ultimate responsibility of business success or failure does not lie on your shoulders, unless you occupy the leadership position.

Limitations

- As an employee, you will earn a salary and have no profit sharing. There would always be a ceiling on the amount of money you make in a year.

- The management eventually decides the work you would be required to do; an individual employee has a very limited say in the key decisions.
- There is no source of passive income, except your personal investments.
- The yearly hike you get might be negated by the inflation in the economy. Your hike and bonus would be controlled by the policies of the organization and the condition of the economy. No employee has ever featured or will ever feature in the *Forbes* list of the richest persons in the world.
- Since you work for a limited number of hours, you can serve only a limited number of clients.
- The sense of ownership is usually missing if you are working in the capacity of an employee.

Whenever you decide to pursue your passion you would be faced with the question of choosing one of the paths—business owner, self-employed, or an employee. There are merits and demerits associated with each one of them and I suggest you choose the one based upon the size of your vision and personal risk appetite. I always advise my seminar participants to aim at creating a business system in the long run because it is the only way to serve maximum people and to follow your passion in the grandest possible manner.

Start as an employee and learn as much as you can about the industry. Then, over a period of time, when you feel confident, do not hesitate to take the entrepreneurial step as a self-employed professional or as a business owner. You may love your work as an employee but other crucial factors—like the vision of the management, attitude of your co-workers, partnerships, and alliances—would be beyond your control and can take the steam out of your passion.

If you think your teacher is tough, wait until you get a boss. He doesn't have tenure.

—Bill Gates

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- The amount of money you make is dependent upon the value you bring to the market and not merely the number of hours you work.
- The upper limit on the amount of money earned from any profession is determined by the form in which it is pursued—business owner, self-employed, or employee.
- Passive income or multiple streams of income is the only way to become super rich.

Self-Awareness

- What were the 10 things you were taught about money, that are limiting your passion?
- What is your per hour wage rate? Do you think you deserve better?
- How would you like to pursue your passion—as a business owner, as a self-employed professional, or as an employee? What are the various advantages and disadvantages associated with each of these models?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

The Productivity Principle

The Productivity Principle states that we should not mistake movement with achievement—they are two different concepts. So many of us are busy making a living but only a few of us are actually living.

The Processionary Caterpillars

The noted French naturalist Jean Henri Fabre studied this unique little furry insect in great detail. What makes this caterpillar special is its instinct to follow in lock step the caterpillar in front of it. This behaviour not only gives the caterpillar its name but a deadly characteristic too.

Fabre demonstrated this unusual behaviour with a simple experiment. He took a flowerpot and placed a number of processionary caterpillars in single file, around the circumference of the pot's rim. Each caterpillar's head touched the caterpillar in front of it. Fabre then placed the caterpillars' favourite food in the middle of the circle created by the caterpillars' procession around the rim of the flowerpot. Each caterpillar followed the one ahead thinking that it was heading for the food. Round and round went those insects for seven days. After a week of this mindless activity, the caterpillars

had covered almost quarter of a mile in distance and started to drop dead because of exhaustion and starvation. All that they had to do to avoid death was to stop the senseless circling of the flowerpot and head directly toward the food. The food was lying less than six inches away from those ever-circling crawlers. However, the processionary caterpillars were locked into this lifestyle and couldn't extricate themselves from this mindless behaviour.

Get Off the Conveyor Belt

We humans are not very different from these processionary caterpillars when it comes to truly living our lives. Most of us are slowly, but surely, marching towards an emotional death, if not a physical death. Human spirit thrives on passion, emotion, enthusiasm, and energy. All these life-changing “emotions” are available within our reach, yet like the processionary caterpillars, we get lost in the “activity” syndrome.

Think about it. At the age of three, we are put in an education system and for the next 15–20 years we follow an “educational procession.” Once we graduate out of the system, we join the “career procession.” It appears as if we are put on the conveyor belt of life at the age of three, and thereafter we are just required to follow a conventional path of formal education, career, and retirement. The problem with the conveyor belt is that we start our journey as unique beings, but we lose our originality on the way, and end up as each other's clones. Yes, we do not have much choice when it comes to following the educational procession, but we can very well decide to choose a career that fulfils us the most. Before you decide to follow someone's footsteps in any profession you can always ask yourself—“Is the journey going to be an exhaustive experience or an enriching voyage of self-discovery?”

Never follow a crowd; there are so many places where a crowd cannot go.

Too Busy or Too Scared

A majority of the people go to a job that they hate. Their work makes them miserable, yet they report at work every day to make a living. Whatever may be the real reason, the unnecessary rush to choose a career and then to start it is surely one of the culprits.

The matters of the heart are sacrificed to pursue the matters of the wallet. Then there are people who are so busy with their professional grind that words like “passion” and “fulfilment” sound meaningless to them. As soon as the studies are completed, an individual is expected to become an “earning machine.” This is how most of the people step into their professions—with a fear of being left behind. They start with their professions not as a mariner setting out on an exploration, but with the anxiety of a soldier entering a battlefield, not sure whether he would survive the next recession. It is very much possible to stay in a job for 40 years, and yet end up broke at the age of 65.

Being busy does not always mean real work. The object of all work is production or accomplishment, and to either of these ends there must be forethought, system, planning, intelligence, and honest purpose, as well as perspiration. Seeming to do is not doing.

—Thomas A. Edison

The “Mad Rush” Disease

I believe that our generation suffers from a “mad rush” disease. People are busy going somewhere in their professional life, without considering if it would give them happiness or misery. They’re addicted to busyness and dread idleness. They experience guilt when they aren’t working or doing something related to their professional lives. Movement is more important to them, even if they are not achieving anything from it. Managers and employee spend their time on things which are of little consequence for their organization.

The Failure to Use the Power of Emotions

We wrote thousands of answers—certainly more right than wrong—to clear our exams and earn the degree we now hold. Based upon the number of right or wrong answers we gave, we were given labels like fast, smart, intelligent, sharp, slow, average, or dumb. Impressionable minds of children are embossed with the message that good grades mean a secure future and poor grades mean a poor future. More emphasis is given to their academic success than to building an all-round personality. There are some private schools which use better educational techniques, but more than 95–98 per cent of the schools follow the same beaten path.

The biggest oversight of the education system responsible for the mad rush disease is the failure to incorporate emotions and fun in teaching. Think about any lesson or incident that you have remembered or will remember forever? I can bet on this fact that either it was a very emotional event for you or there was a lot of fun involved in the process. This is precisely the reason why we remember a movie dialogue (which we heard only once) even after many years, but we forget the chapters of our subjects (that we studied for years) as soon as our exams are over. By the way, it is possible to add emotions or fun to any subject and many good schools actually do that. Good teachers know how to use fun and emotions in their classrooms. The damages of not leveraging the power of fun and emotions are twofold:

First, people start viewing learning as a painful, boring process, due to the absence of fun. *Whenever you hear someone making statements like “I am done with my studies—graduation or master’s or PhD,” you know where they are coming from. Quite amazingly, they never make such statements at the end of a vacation mentioning that they had enough of it.* Had learning been a fun process, they would have gone back to it again and again in one way or the other—books, trainings, or short courses.

Second, this is what I call a bigger damage—emotional discharge. Barring a few, majority of the students graduate from the system as standardized and homogenized beings. They are loaded with information but with little or no inspiration to use the information. They have forgotten the importance of inspiration, enthusiasm, energy, passion, and attitude.

It Feels Weird Syndrome

I have seen this phenomenon in my coaching clients. During the first two or three sessions with them, I make them write an essay about themselves, and then I tell them to answer the following questions:

- What are your 10 biggest dreams in life (something without which your life would be incomplete)?
- What are your 10 biggest fears in life?
- What are your five strengths and weaknesses?

The first rebuff all my clients give me is—“*Do I really need to write this emotional stuff?*” When I tell them that the exercise is absolutely essential, most of them give me a standardized answer. “Ok, I will do it, but to be honest it feels weird and unnatural to write about myself, my dreams or passions, and my fears.” No matter how much I try to laugh it off, I cannot help but think about how uncomfortable and handicapped we become when it comes to discussing emotions.

It does not feel weird discussing and analyzing at length the working style of a particular CEO, but it feels weird analyzing our own emotions.

It does not feel weird calculating the revenue growth of a company based 5,000 miles away from them right from its inception, but it feels weird to calculate how our dreams have fared over the past five years.

It does not feel weird to calculate the potential market size for a generic drug to be produced by a pharmaceutical company in Israel, but it feels weird to calculate our own potential.

They can discuss confidently why a particular product would fail or succeed in the market; but they are unsure if their business idea or plan would succeed or not.

They can easily do a SWOT—Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats—analysis of an international company, but they cannot speak about their personal strengths and weaknesses. Talking about others comes so naturally to them, but knowing their own self appears as an unnatural and alien thought.

They do not feel weird spending hours at office meetings or offsite in designing and developing their organization's vision, yet they feel weird to take out an hour from their life for designing their life's mission statement.

I think they should feel weird and uncomfortable doing what they presently do—calculating industry or company growth rates, product portfolio mix, returns on investments, valuation, consumer preference, and various other complicated stuff. They should feel perfectly natural and comfortable to discover their purpose, passion, dreams, strengths, and weaknesses.

“No learning can happen without emotions. Information does not change people; realization does.”

Lack of Understanding How Wealth Is Created—And Fooled by Consumerism

The second cause behind the “mad rush” are the things that were taught, or rather not taught, to us about wealth and money. It is possible to get a doctorate in “advanced economics” or “financial management” without reading a chapter on the topic of “How to make money.” No wonder so many educated people struggle when it comes to money. Subjects like wealth management and financial accounting are taught without any emphasis on wealth creation. The only thing they learn about the subject of wealth is that they are expected to start earning money once their formal education is completed. Hence the urge to join the mad rush.

Any person who does not start earning immediately after studies, is not viewed as a responsible adult. There is so much pressure to meet the expectations from parents, family, and friends. Many

a time, in order to fulfil these expectations, an individual sacrifices his or her passion. They are too scared to take the risk of leaving a safe, secure, mundane job for an untested business model or a profession, even if it is related to their passion. The main idea of commerce was not to make money, but to add value; money is merely an automatic and essential outcome of work or value added. This phenomenon is even more pronounced in cases of entrepreneurs and self-employed professionals. People who quit their jobs with consistent income to start a business venture often forget that every business has a gestation period. Sometimes it takes years before the cash flows become regular. This is the result they often leave their pursuit in the middle. They start thinking that if they are not making money every month, they are unsuccessful. *Due to their monthly earning habits or expectations, most of the people fail to understand that wealth creation is a matter of patience. They are willing to live from pay cheque to pay cheque in a profession they despise, but they do not have the patience to give their dream profession a chance.*

Yes, sometimes in order to follow your passion you might be required to give up your regular cash flows; trust me, it is worth the sacrifice. You would get to know a lot about yourself in the process.

Money Is a Drug

I think why many people do not take the entrepreneurial plunge in life is because they are addicted to one of the best drugs that ever existed in the world—money. This becomes all the more difficult if you have worked in a safe, secure job for some time. In a job, you get your salary credited to your bank account after every 30 days, while in entrepreneurship you do not make money for months, or sometimes for years, because you are building a pipeline for income and the income flow cannot start till the pipeline or the business system/model is well in place.

Individuals who have worked for five years have received 60 shots of the world's most addictive drug and five megashots of the same drug in the form of yearly bonus. No wonder they find it so difficult to even think about entrepreneurship as an option. I can bet on this fact that the entrepreneurship rate (number of people starting their own business) among salaried people would be positively different if the salary was paid on a yearly basis rather than monthly basis. It has nothing to do with the amount of salary paid to them but everything to do with the addiction they have developed because of the frequency of the drug called "money."

The Transition

There is one advice I always give to people seeking to follow their passion by starting a business or as a self-employed professional. Do not judge your business plan merely on the basis of monetary returns during the initial years. The initial years are the learning years, and the amount of learning you undergo will reflect in your earnings during the later years. Do not take any step that compels you to shut down your business and cause regret in future. Have faith in your business idea and confidence in your abilities to implement the same. If you are not earning enough during the initial period, do not panic; adjust and experiment with new things and you will soon see the results. Some of the most successful entrepreneurs and companies did not earn any money during the first few years. It is called the gestation period.

Do you have patience and commitment to bring your passion to life? Are you strategic enough to discover innovative ways of making money through your passion? The answer to these questions will determine your success in undertaking the wonderful journey called "Passion into Profession." Never let a few hundreds of thousands of rupees in your bank account decide whether you would live a fulfilled professional life or a frustrated one.

If you need money to follow your dream, you really must be really very poor.

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- Movement and achievement are two different concepts. So many of us are busy making a living but only a few of us are actually living.
- Some of the most successful entrepreneurs and companies did not earn any money during the first few years.
- No learning can happen without emotions. Information does not change people; realization does.

Self-Awareness

- Do you act like a processionary caterpillar in your existing profession?
- Do you feel that you do not accomplish much, even after spending hours at your work? Are you also caught up in the “busy” trap?
- How long can you stay without money while pursuing your passion, since the initial years may not yield a lot of money?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

The Ownership Principle

The Ownership Principle states that you need to take complete ownership of your passion. You must take complete responsibility for its realization; fight the external criticism and the limitations of your own conditioned mind. Once you start taking ownership, you would realize that you are bigger than any of your problems.

The Two Wolves

There is a Native American folk tale about a young man confiding in his grandfather that he sometimes treats his friends harshly and sometimes kindly. He did not understand why.

“Let me tell you a story,” said the grandfather. “I too have struggled with this feeling many times.” He continued, “There is a battle that goes on inside us all. It is as if there are two wolves battling inside each of us.”

“One is good.

“The first wolf stands for joy, peace, perseverance, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, empathy, generosity, truth, faith, and success. He does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offence when no offence was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way. He saves all his

energy for the right fight. He wants you to live a life full of abundance, prosperity, and success.

“The other wolf is evil.”

“The second wolf is all about anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, and ego. The littlest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is helpless anger, for his anger will change nothing.

“Sometimes, it is hard to live with these two wolves battling inside us, for both will try and dominate our spirit.”

The boy looked intently into his grandfather’s eyes and asked, “Which wolf wins, Grandfather?”

The grandfather smiled and quietly said, “The one you feed.”

The Wolves inside You—Fulfilment and Frustration

The folklore is not just restricted to the emotions of anger, but it also explains the reason why only a few people feel professionally satiated and fulfilled while the majority live a life oozing out only frustration.

There is a wolf inside you that wants you to choose and live a very successful professional life. He is the dreamer inside you that identifies no limitations. He believes that you can be everything you want to be, do everything you want to do, and have everything you want to have. He yearns for creative expressions and the fullest realization of your potential. He always motivates you to follow your uniqueness. He is primarily driven by faith and possibility. He always tells you to listen to your inner voice over the worldly noise. He is the wolf of fulfilment and passion.

Then there is another wolf inside you that forces you to compromise on your dreams. He is always scared and fears failure. He always keeps you in the comfort zone and stops you from attempting new things. He is always cynical and keeps giving the message

that your future cannot be different from the past. He is the one who is always afraid of doing anything unconventional or challenging the status quo. He is always seeking social approval for any action he takes. He tells you that to survive is more important than to grow and succeed. He is the wolf of fear and frustration.

There is a constant war going on between the two wolves inside you, who keep trying to step over the other and emerge victorious. If you have ever experienced dilemma in your career choices, you know what I mean here. The wolf that wins is the wolf you choose to feed—by your thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Choose Wisely

If “upgrading mental software” was as important as upgrading a gadget’s operating system;

If “happiness maintenance” was as important as “automobile maintenance”;

If “feeding the mind” was given the same priority as “feeding the stomach”;

If “self-image” was as crucial as our “social image”;

If “being kind” was more important than “being right”;

If “living our passion” was as important as “getting a job”;

Our lives would be transformed forever!

What Happened to Those Ambitions?

This is a matter of personal observation, but for a moment think about all the people you know. How many people out of them feel engaged, energized, and enthusiastic? One tragic thing that I noticed within my friends’ circle and peer set is that I have seen them getting emotionally discharged with every passing year. They are the people who in their teens or early twenties believed that they would change the world, or at least make a positive contribution during their lifetime.

They started their voyage as a passionate explorer in the seas of possibility, but as years passed, their ship of goals sank down and downgraded from “exploring the unknown” to merely “surviving the known.” As they complete 30, 35, or 40 years of life, their mind starts accommodating compunctions instead of dreams; they find themselves trapped in the vicious cycle of mortgage payments and bills, or the quicksands of health and relationship issues. They are already dead; they would be buried later. I have seen some of my good friends undergo this tragic transition from “living to existing.” Some of them were so passionate that I looked up to them as role models; but I guess somewhere they accepted the world’s opinion of them as their reality. They gave up what separated them from the crowd, to be accepted as part of the crowd. They are still living a good life as per worldly standards, but I wonder if they are as successful as per their own standards. They dared to dream but never paid the price for it, which is a prerequisite for living the dream.

Regret for the things we did can be tempered by time; it is regret for the things we did not do that is inconsolable.

—Sydney J. Harris

Why Taking Ownership for One’s Passion Is Important

Being passionate about something is not enough; you have to live the passion. Your dream profession might be to become a successful lawyer, accountant, musician, scientist, politician, business owner, engineer, dancer, consultant, photographer, author, speaker, architect, designer, entertainer, comedian, teacher, sportsman, chef, or a painter, but to have a dream does not guarantee its fruition. It is not enough to aspire in life; you also need to perspire to actualize your passion. The reason why I put the “ownership principle” as the last principle is because I firmly believe that none of the principles can work in its absence. For me, taking ownership of our professional lives is a fact that we cannot afford to ignore.

The presence of ownership literally guarantees your success in living a professionally fulfilling life, while its absence guarantees a life of frustration and unrealized potential. You can check your ownership for your Love List, by the following three road tests:

The Responsibility Test

Who is responsible for your life—personal and professional? Who do you think will decide the career you choose and ultimately live? Who decides how rich you will become? Who can stop you from living a passionate and successful professional life? Who decides whether you would be an employee, a self-employed professional, or a business owner? Who is responsible if you are leading a frugal and frustrated existence? Who is responsible for your professional successes or failures? Who decides whether you will ever start working on your passion?

If the answer to all the above questions is not you, then you are not taking ownership for your passion. Chances are high that you would not succeed in making a successful profession out of your passion. Taking responsibility is the first prerequisite for any kind of professional success. While people would be holding market conditions or a poor economy responsible for their failures, you would be cruising successfully through these temporary storms.

The Action Test

Any individual who takes responsibility for choosing a path is also required to walk the path. The world is full of dreamers who never started on their dreams because they did not take any action towards its fruition. What are the 5–10 actions you need to take or habits you need to inculcate to realize your passion? For a number of years I dreamed of writing a book, but the dream did not become a reality until I started spending four to five hours every day, thinking seven days a week, for a few years. It took me seven or eight

years to conceptualize, and two or three years of dedicated effort, to complete the book. What are the 5–10 actions you should take daily for the realization of your goal? Write down your short-term and long-term action plans for success. Nothing happens without action. If you are not taking action on your dreams, you are just being a custodian and not the owner of the dream.

The Criticism Test

Sometimes, to take action on your Love List, you might be required to go against the popular vote of friends, family members, and society. What would you do in such a case? Would you fight for your business idea, job change, or new venture, even if the people who are closest to you tell you that they do not see any sense in your decisions?

Even if you take action on your passion, success might elude you for a long time. Are you willing to stand up to criticism from the people who mean the most to you? People who take ownership do not worry even if nobody believes in their idea, vision, or dream. They know that there is a reason why only they can see that particular dream. Never undertake a career just to please your parents, family, friends, or others; you would end up as an emotional wreck. Once you take ownership you realize that critics might stop you temporarily but only you have the power to do it permanently.

Your ownership quotient will determine how high and how far you would go in your selected career. If you pass these three road tests, reaching your goal is just a matter of time.

Take Ownership of Your Dreams, Because Only You Can

Out of billions of people who have walked this planet so far, and who will ever walk this planet again, there is no one else who can replace you; your looks, fingerprints, voice—everything is

different from the rest of the world. Everything that you are or ever will be is up to you.

No one else can start that business, exactly like you.

No one else can write that book, exactly like you.

No one else can produce that piece of music, exactly like you.

No one else can make that movie, exactly like you.

No one else can deliver that talk, exactly like you.

Look at the things that you love to do. Do you think others can do those things exactly like you? No, I do not think so. You were born unique and if you are not acknowledging your uniqueness by taking action, you surely are doing an injustice to your abilities.

God's gift to you is more talent and ability than you will ever use in one lifetime. Your gift to God is to develop and utilize as much of that talent and ability as you can, in this lifetime.

—Steve Bow

You Need to Start from the Start and Live It Till Your Last Breath

The greatest secret I discovered about living a life full of passion was that there was actually no secret. Yes, there are some smart strategies and better ways of living your life, but there are no such secrets.

There are only truths in this world. When people do not care to know them, they start calling them “secrets.” One great truth is that human beings cannot live happily without a purpose. Their souls are too big to be restricted to the domain of a job with monetary benefits; they need a calling or a passion to follow. Just like the human body has the biological urge to procreate, the human spirit has the spiritual urge to express its uniqueness, and it does so by fulfilling a purpose. Common sense tells us that every human should live a happy life, yet it is not the common practice. The reason behind so much unhappiness, dissatisfaction, frustration, stress, and tension is that we have messed up when it comes to learning the basic principles of living a fulfilled life.

You have to discover it in you, before it dies with you.

—Siddhartha

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- The ownership of a dream is tested in three ways—the responsibility you take for starting and living it, the actions you take for its fruition, and the criticism you handle when you fail.
- Taking responsibility is the first prerequisite for any kind of professional success.
- There are only truths in this world; when people do not care to know them, they start calling them “secrets.” One great truth is that human beings cannot live happily without a purpose.

Self-Awareness

- Do you feel emotionally charged up on a daily basis or are you living a life of daily chores?
- Do you take complete responsibility for discovering and living your passion?
- Are you willing to take ownership of all the failures and criticism that would come in the journey of Passion into Profession?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

Part Three

Did I Share My Dream?

Congratulations!

All the 12 files of the program *Passion into Profession* have been successfully installed in your brain.

You are now aware of these 12 life-changing principles that when applied can transform your life—personal and professional. I found these principles very useful for transforming my life—personal and professional. Once I understood and applied these principles the transformation was so quick and effective that it still fills me with a sense of gratitude and awe whenever I think about it. We have covered a lot of material so far, but this is only the start. All I know is that it starts with you but it does not end with you. One life lived with passion serves as an example for millions of people who are living lives of quiet desperation. It serves as an “example of possibility” for all the people who are living a caged existence.

In a nutshell, you are responsible for discovering your dream, living your dream, and sharing your dream.

It's All about Service

We all will take care of ourselves someday; the idea is not to stop there. Invest your life in the lives of other people.

Three Important Lessons

*I wanna be a billionaire so bad
Buy all of the things I never had
Uh, I wanna be on the cover of Forbes magazine
Smiling next to Oprah and the Queen!*

—from a song by Travie McCoy and Bruno Mars

From Becoming a Billionaire to Serving a Billion

When I was first initiated in the field of personal development, I was only 15 years old. Most of the things I now know are things that I learned through so many years of reading, experimenting, and listening to the words of great men. I still remember the day when I first learned the importance of writing one's goals and reading it a couple of times during the day. The excitement of a teenager coupled with a rush of a serious learner! I immediately started to apply whatever I learned. During those days I used to think that money could solve all the problems, hence one of the goals I had was to be a billionaire.

So I took a small card, of the size of a visiting card, and wrote the words: "*My Goal—I want to be a billionaire.*"

I would carry the card with me wherever I went, reading it quite a few times during the day. I believed that if I read it more than two times a day, I would become a billionaire faster. I followed the regimen religiously during the last year of my school and the first year of my college.

I was now in the second year of my college, and not an inch closer to my goal. Still I never gave up and religiously read the goal card as many times as I could. I carried it to college every day, and on one particular occasion I forgot it inside one of the college desks.

Next day when I entered the class, I saw one of my classmates holding the card and displaying it to the entire class.

"Who is the aspiring billionaire among us? We all would like to know his name," were his words. It was evident that my classmate just wanted to pull my leg and make fun of the owner of such an outrageous dream. It is really funny to see how people try to make fun of others who dare to dream big.

I silently cursed myself for making the mistake of forgetting it the other day. "How could I be so irresponsible?" I said to myself.

He then approached me and asked, "Sid, if I remember correctly, you were sitting at this desk yesterday. And I found this inside the desk. Does it belong to you? So you are the one who is going to be the Mr Billionaire from our college?" He was waiting for an answer and the eyes of the entire class were now glued on me.

I wanted to tell the truth but lacked the courage to do so. Moreover, I did not want to be the laughing stock of my classmates. I just had a few seconds before my silence would have been considered as my acceptance.

"No, this does not belong to me. I do not even know what's written on it," were the only words that came out of my mouth.

Lesson One: Take Ownership of Your Dream (I Disowned My Dream)

“Oh, I thought it was yours. Even the handwriting looks similar to yours,” he replied.

“Dude, it does not belong to me. If you want I can keep it for you,” I said with a confident smile, thinking at least I would get the card back. The students had already lost interest in the conversation and they even started to laugh at him because of his failed attempt to corner me.

“Forget it,” was all he said but he did not give me the card. Instead he threw it out of the class door. I saw my goal—my dream—lying on the college floor and people stepping on it mercilessly, yet I did not have the courage to pick it up. I failed lest people would have got to know the truth.

The teacher entered the class and he started the session with some subject that I do not even remember. Occasionally during the class, I tried to look back at my goal card—something that had become an integral part of my life over two years. I saw people stepping and walking over it. It lay there in the dust and with sole prints all over it. Then some student walking outside the class unintentionally kicked it and it was no longer in my view. I tried to focus on the lecture but I failed to concentrate.

Lesson Two: Never Let People Kick Your Dream, Intentionally or Unintentionally (I Failed to Protect It)

“Once the class finishes and the students leave, I will get it,” I thought to myself.

After the classroom was empty, I went outside to pick up my goal card, but it was not there. I frantically checked the entire corridor but I could not find anything. Somebody took away my dream and I do not know who it was.

Lesson Three: Your Goal Should Be to Serve Others (I Failed to Set the Right Goal)

After the college incident, I learned a lot about the process of goal setting and the importance of setting the right kind of goals. As Zig Ziglar correctly said, “If you help enough people get what they want, you will get everything you want.” You can earn the love and appreciation of other people, only by serving them. Even if your goals are monetary goals, remember one basic thing in life—money is what you receive from others in exchange for service rendered to them. If you try to become rich without bringing any value to the lives of the other people, your success would be short-lived. There is nothing selfish about your desire to be rich and wealthy, as far as you are willing to serve your fellow human beings through trade and commerce.

Once I learned the importance of serving others, it changed the quality of my life. Now all my goals include an element of service in them. My most important goal still has the word billion in it, but it now pertains to a billion lives. The goal card now reads something like this: *“To inspire at least a billion people to live a happy, successful, and passionate life.”*

I have learned to take ownership for it and do not let anyone kick my goal around. Most of my friends and family members are aware of this goal, and I am glad that they understand and respect it.

Service to Humanity—The Only Way to Make Money

Think about it. If you have ever earned some money legally and ethically, you have served others either with your product or service. *Musicians, singers, dancers, directors, scriptwriters, stand-up comedians, radio jockeys, and actors serve entertainment to people.*

A teacher serves knowledge to humanity.

A photographer serves memories to people.

An architect and an interior designer serve comfort and style to consumers.

A painter and art director serves art to the people.

Fitness trainers, dieticians, and nutrition specialists serve health to people.

Software engineers, consultants, bankers, and IT specialists serve solutions to various client problems.

An entrepreneur serves a consumer need.

Doctors and surgeons serve health and well-being.

Inspirational speakers and authors serve personal development or perspectives to people.

Chefs serve the best food to people.

Sports personalities like basketball players, chess champions, cricketers, footballers, and sports experts or correspondents serve excitement and thrill to people.

Air Force pilots, army and navy personnel, and policepersons serve security to other people.

Journalists and reporters serve news to people.

Corporate trainers serve better organizational behaviour to people.

So on and so forth....

Pick up people from any profession, and you would know that they are providing some service to fellow human beings. Your aim in life is to match your passion, to the various services needed by humanity.

The best formula I have heard for professional fulfilment and wealth creation—do what you love the most. Match it with what others love to be served and you would surely get ample monetary rewards in return.

I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.

—Albert Schweitzer

Everyone Serves: How Many Are You Serving?

People who follow their passion but struggle financially are surely missing out on the service quotient. Remember, if your passion

is not making you enough money you are not serving enough people; or you are not serving them in the manner they want to be served. When it comes to making a successful profession out of your passion, finding your passion is just one-half of the puzzle; the other half is about monetizing your passion. And the only way to monetize your passion is to find enough people who can be served by your passion.

Your financial success is directly proportional to the number of people who use your product or service. You can choose to serve a few clients or a large number of people—the rewards would vary in both the cases. The only exception to this rule is the elite products and services that are offered only to a selective segment. But even then the business offering such products to a greater number of consumers would earn more than the business which offers it to fewer consumers.

Secret to Wealth: Find a Way to Serve a Need

Once a journalist challenged Henry Ford and said, “If we took all your money and assets, you would be nothing.” Henry Ford replied with great confidence, “Take my money and all I have and in five years I’ll have it all back and then some.” One reason why Ford had so much confidence in his abilities was because he knew the secret to great wealth—discover a big human need and then build a business model around the same. If you deliver value to the lives of other people, then most of them will be happy to pay money to you to receive that service.

Bill Gates gave the world the much needed software.

Steve Jobs gave the world the best computers and other electronic gadgets.

Mark Zuckerberg gave the world a platform to connect.

Larry Page and Sergey Brin gave the world the much needed information search engine.

Sam Walton gave the world the cheapest place to shop for their daily needs.

The list goes on and on....

How do you plan to serve the world through your passion? What do you think people need the most? Can you align it with your passion?

Two Ways to Serve

There are many people in this world who believe in the notion that only the not-for-profit social enterprises and non-governmental organizations truly serve the world, while all other business organizations are capitalists trying to profit at the cost of society. I want to remove the guilt feeling that people harbour against their personal aspiration to get rich. The most important thing in this world is to serve—with or without profit motive is a matter of personal choice.

Serve without Profit Motive

We may aim to become super wealthy in our life, but we must not forget that more than three billion people living on this planet live on less than ₹100-per-day income. I am sharing this truth not to deter you from pursuing your wealth goal, but to inspire you to help as many people as you can. There are billions of people on this planet for whom even survival is a challenge. If you are one person who has a passion, but is not driven by the desire for material abundance (nothing wrong with the desire, it is just a matter of personal choice), you can try to implement your passion as a social entrepreneur. A social entrepreneur is a person who uses business to solve social issues.

Some of the social entrepreneurs I personally admire a lot are Mohammad Yunus of Grameen Bank, Arunachalam Muruganantham of Jayaashree Industries, and Salman Khan of the Khan Academy. These are people who could have easily amassed millions from their business ideas but they chose to serve humanity

without any monetary expectations. They are people driven by passion and a desire to better the lives of the less fortunate.

Serve with Profit Motive

If you think social entrepreneurship is the only way to serve people, think again. Where would the world be without the contributions of profitable organizations like Microsoft, Apple, Google, Facebook, HP, McDonalds, Walmart, KFC, Toyota, Honda, Reliance Industries, Airtel, Infosys, and TCS? Can you imagine living your life without the products and services offered by them and countless other organizations? How many millions of jobs were created because of these organizations? What I wish to convey is that capitalism is one of the best things that ever happened to us. Even though the founders of these companies are billionaires, they have served millions of people through their products and services.

You will never see a billionaire who has not served humanity through his passion. Their passion compelled them to create products and services for the betterment of humanity. If you are making others' lives better, you have every right to be rich.

"You can serve others without getting rich, but you cannot get rich without serving others."

Passion into Profession—My Action Planner

Insights

- We all will take care of ourselves someday; the idea is not to stop there.
- You can serve the society with profit motive or without profit motive—in both cases you are serving. Starting a not-for-profit organization is one way to serve but not the only way to serve humanity.

- Your wealth is directly proportional to the number of people you serve.

Self-Awareness

- How many people are you serving at present through your profession?
- How many people do you plan to serve through your passion?
- What difference do you plan to make before you leave this world?

Action Steps

Write down three actions you would take because of the insights and the self-awareness exercise.

If It Ever Happens, It's up to You

God Will Not Make You an Entrepreneur, It Is Not His Job

Do you believe in God?

If your answer is “Yes,” I have a few questions for you.

Do read them carefully because the answers to these questions will give you some life-changing insights.

Do you think that God likes to see you struggle every day in your professional and personal lives? Do you think God likes to see you living a passionless and purposeless existence? Did God create you to undergo all the suffering? How do you think God feels when you give up on your dreams? Do you think God is on your side? Do you think God enjoys when you are in pain? Are you using your God-given talents and abilities? Do you think your problems are so big that you cannot solve them with God's help? What explanation will you give to God for not living your dream life? Do you think it is so late now that even God cannot help you in your passion?

If you truly believe in God, you must know that nothing is impossible with God. It is your duty to shine in this world, live an exemplary life, and make such a great contribution towards the betterment of humanity that God feels proud of you. It would be stupid of you to feel that God would not help you in your noble intentions. Decide once and for all that God is on your side and not on the side of your limitations. There is God inside each and

every one of us and He wants us to live a life full of passion, success, and happiness.

If your answer is “No,” I have just one question for you.

If there is nobody up there controlling your life, then don't you think you are responsible for every action you take or fail to take, and all the results you get in your life?

The only person who can change your life is you. It is entirely up to you to identify your passion, inspire yourself, take action, and persist until you succeed. This book is not about promoting religion, spirituality, or belief in some higher power, although I firmly believe in all of them. Whether you believe in God or not, you must believe in yourself, because God doesn't help you until you stir up efforts and help yourself. You need to wake up to the fact that the power to change your destiny—personal and professional—lies in your hands.

A Challenge to Apply What You Know

You have read a lot of information so far but no amount of reading or memorizing will give you the results you desire. It is only the understanding and implementation of knowledge that makes a difference. So, regardless of what I or anyone else might say, you are going to have to prove these principles for yourself. I challenge you to take your success to the next level through a proper understanding of these principles. It does not matter how much others believe in these principles; your life will be transformed only by your beliefs and actions.

Get Up and Play the Game

There are only two ways to live one's passions—as a player or as a spectator. You can sit on the sidetracks of life and watch, or you can get up and jump into the playing field. Always aspire to be a player in life since you will be able to experience a range of emotions

on first-hand basis, rather than watching others experiencing them and soaking in the residue by relating to it. The rewards are also reserved for the players; spectators are merely buying those emotions by paying for them—time and money. *Aim to be a person who has tasted victory or swallowed failure—not the one who only has opinions about them.* The world is full of people who like to spend their time talking about successful people, rather than using the same time to be successful. They have enough information about how to be successful or how to build a successful business, but they do not have the inspiration to do it themselves. It is my earnest desire for you to use the information in this book to inspire yourself to take action.

Everyone Dies, What Matters Is Who Really Lived

The word “passion” has a different meaning for each one of us. Even the intensity of desire to live a life full of passion is different for different individuals. I have worked with people from diverse nationalities, of varied age groups, and in different professions, but I have never come across even two people who defined the words “passion” and “success” in the exact same manner. Every individual has a unique set of dreams, skills, talents, and goals in life.

What many people do not realize is that we only have one life to live, and we cannot get out of life alive. What we do with our dreams, skills, talents, and goals during our lifetime determines how we will feel during our last breaths.

The three questions I mentioned in the beginning of the book will surely flash in front of our eyes:

1. *Did I dare to dream?*
2. *Did I live my dream?*
3. *Did I share my dream?*

And I sincerely wish that the way in which you live your life—personal and professional—enables you to answer these three most

important questions with a loud and confident “Yes,” because any other answer would be nothing short of a tragedy. I have sincerely shared all the knowledge, tools, and techniques that I have learned in my wonderful journey of Passion into Profession, but what you do with it is totally up to you. You can choose to act on the information and make your professional life a masterpiece or you can continue living your life the way you have been living prior to reading this book. You cannot change your destination overnight, but you can take the first step to change your direction, today. And as you change your direction, your dream destination would just be a matter of time. You can use these principles to become all that you are capable of becoming. Someday maybe, I will get to tell others your story.

I also want to thank you for your willingness to learn and the commitment to live your passion, and for allowing me to share with you some of the principles that have made a difference in my life. I leave you with the words, of Dr Howard Thurman, that have guided me during the tough times and difficult choices.

The ideal situation for a man or woman to die is to have family members standing...with them as they cross over. But imagine, if you will, being on your deathbed...and standing around your bed are the ghosts of the ideas, the abilities, the talents, the gifts, the dreams...given to you by life, that you for whatever reason...you never pursued those dreams, you never did anything with those ideas, you never used those talents, you never used those gifts, you never took advantage of those opportunities....And there they are...standing around your bed, looking at you before you take your last dying breath, looking at you with angry eyes saying, “We came to you, and only you could have given us life and now we must die with you forever.”

Make sure that when you leave this earth, every passion on your Love List is marked with one word written next to it: “Achieved.”

May you shine like a sun and light up the entire world with the fire of your “passion.”

Goodbye and God bless.

About the Author

Siddhartha Sharma is the Chief Executive Officer of Success Monks Performance Consulting, one of the fastest growing training and performance consulting companies in India.

For more than a decade now, Siddhartha has been studying the subject of “human potential maximization” and his life’s focus now is to share this knowledge with all people around the world so that billions can powerfully transform and improve their lives. Prior to starting Success Monks, he worked with McKinsey & Company.

Siddhartha has trained and coached professionals from McKinsey & Company, IMRB, Voith GmbH, DSM, IPSOS, HCL, OD Alternatives, EXL Services, QSA Advisory, NICSI, RIICO, and many more corporate houses at Success Monks seminars.

He is also a keynote speaker, and regularly speaks at forums such as TED and the National Entrepreneurial Network. As a speaker, he also visits the most prestigious colleges of the country—IITs, NITs, IMI, IIFT, IMT, Fore School, CBS, DCE, and many others.

He is also the author of *60 Keys to Success*.