

Own Your Career

How to
Design a
Rewarding
& Fulfilling
Career



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You may work for over 40 years. A lot will change during that time. How do you manage a rewarding & fulfilling career especially when you were never taught how?

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or years I have heard messages like these from my new clients:

- I don't know how I ended up in my career.
- I still don't know what I want to do when I grow up.
- I stumbled into my profession.
- I didn't know what to major in during college but chose something and stuck with it so I could graduate in four years.
- No one taught me how to manage my career.
- I ended up following my parent's career advice and it doesn't feel right.
- I feel stuck in my career path, it doesn't feel like there is anything else for me.
- I don't know what's next.
- My manager/company/organization isn't concerned about my growth and development nor my career path.
- I'm working hard but I don't seem to be moving in the right direction.
- I fear the career decision I make won't be right.
- I worry that if I make a career change I will not be able to go back.

Doing what you like is freedom. Liking what you do is happiness. - Frank Tyger ∞∞

I feel very connected to those messages. I, too, didn't know how to manage my career. Based on the perspective I gathered from observing my parents, relatives or family friends' careers, the process seemed straightforward. First, you picked a major in college, you graduated and got a job in that profession, you changed jobs a few times when you weren't happy and, finally, you retired. So I put my head down, worked hard and hoped someone would take notice.

They noticed and I was promoted! However, my career did not feel fulfilling. Something was missing. It took a lot of Mondays with what I coined as the "blue flu" (i.e. dreading going into work on Mondays) before I took the first step of managing my own career. I needed to be very clear on what I wanted and how a career path could be rewarding and fulfilling for me.



***You weren't taught how
to manage your career.***

*Rarely do schools talk
about, let alone teach,
how to manage the larger
picture of your career and
how to align jobs with your
personality and your
lifestyle, especially over
time. Good schools offer
career placement services
but most of those only
focus on your first career
or job search.*

This book is intended for anyone who also feels a connection with the messages on the previous page. It is for individuals who know they want to take ownership over their career, but don't know how.

This book lays the foundation for how to manage your career. You will learn: where to start, the questions you need to begin asking yourself to gain clarity on your career path, and all aspects you need to consider when creating your goals, including how to set achievable goals, create a plan, overcome obstacles and accomplish those goals.

Personally, my goal is to help people find and develop rewarding careers by empowering them with the knowledge to manage their careers, today, tomorrow and for years to come.

*Amy Wolfgang
CEO, Wolfgang Career Coaching*

Introduction

I truly believe that we need to **own our careers**. I spend a lot of time speaking to organizations and clients about this topic but what does it mean?

To truly manage your career, you can't leave it to chance or to opportunities others think would be a good move. To have a rewarding and fulfilling career, it's critical to understand what is important to you. Once you gain that clarity you can set goals and overcome the obstacles to achieve those goals.

Essentially it is an investment in you. We invest in many things that are important to us: home, vehicles, education, etc. All of these things take an up-front investment and require maintenance. We take pride in and take care of these investments. Now is the time to turn that work inward. Invest in yourself; in your career. It's the best investment you can make.



Base career decisions on what is important to you, not what is important to others.

*If you don't know
where you are going,
you'll end up
someplace else.*

- Yogi Berra



Change is Inevitable

You might work for over 40 years. A lot will change in those years. Your values and your interests will change. So will the world of work. You will likely have a job in the future that doesn't even exist today. By being an active participant in your career, by taking ownership of it, you can more easily navigate these changes and direct your path to enjoyment and success.

Not Everything is in Your Control

I recognize that many individuals are in jobs or careers out of necessity. These jobs may be misaligned with your career goals and far from ideal. Even if you find yourself in this situation, for a short or long period of time, there are still opportunities for you to manage your career. You may need to alter the content in the book to fit your needs, but I encourage you to see what aspects can work for your situation.

I further recognize that there are many items out of your control with career management. I speak more about this in [Chapter 6](#). We cannot have complete control of our lives. Positive, negative or surprising things happen that are not in our control but impact our career trajectory significantly.

How to Manage Your Career

Career Management involves both “being” and “doing”. This book is a ‘how to’ on managing your career. From a “being” perspective, you need to understand yourself, your core values and your personal mission statement. The “doing” requires planning and action. From the planning perspective, create goals aligned with those values and formulate a strategy to accomplish them. From an “action” perspective you need to execute and alter that plan as necessary, understand how to overcome obstacles, utilize your support network and create career check-ups to ensure you are in alignment with your values and on-course with your goals.



Successfully managing your career can lead to professional and personal fulfillment.



To get started on your Career Management Plan, start a journal and write down your answers to the following questions:

1. *How do you define career success?*
2. *How do you define happiness in your career and life?*
3. *What would you like to be remembered for at the end of your life?*
4. *At the end of your life, what will you regret not having done?*

ACTION STEPS

Personal Mission Statement

Developing your personal mission statement is the first step in managing your career. Your career is like a house and it needs a strong foundation. Your personal mission statement is your foundation... what everything else is built on.

What is Your Sense of Purpose?

Many of you know that a large percentage of companies, including most of the Fortune 500, have corporate mission statements. In this context, mission statements are designed to provide direction and a sense of purpose to the organization.

A personal mission statement is a bit different, but the fundamental principles are the same. It defines who you are and how you will live. It defines your purpose. Simon Sinek calls it your “why” - the purpose, cause, or belief that inspires you to do what you do. Steven Covey, in First Things First, refers to developing a mission statement as “connecting with your own unique purpose and the profound satisfaction that comes from fulfilling it.”

Often, the process of creating your personal mission statement is an extremely valuable exercise. You don’t want to rush through this process or adopt ideas from someone else. Take your time with the process and don’t expect to finalize it right off the bat. Revisit each version the next day; spend time thinking about it and writing down all the ideas that come to mind. Keep your old versions around or create an outline – you want to capture and organize all of these thoughts going through your head.



*The future belongs
to those who believe
in the beauty of their
dreams.*

- Eleanor Roosevelt



*It is never too late
to be what you
might have been.*

- George Elliot

Write It, Review It and Revise It

As you evolve in your life and have new experiences, your personal mission statement may change. Review it on a regular basis, especially as you are setting goals, to remind yourself of your foundation. Some individuals keep their personal mission statement in a place where they can see it each day as a way to motivate them, remind them of their purpose and help them take positive steps to achieve their goals. Others use a portion of their mission statement as their password to their computer. This way, they are reminding themselves multiple times a day of their mission statement.

A personal mission consists of these four parts:

1. What will you do?
2. What will your impact be on others?
3. Why will you do it?
4. How will you do it?

Writing your personal mission statement forces you to look much deeper than your daily tasks or activities. You will think through your priorities on a deep level and align your goals, actions, behaviors with this written statement.

Now it's time to write your personal mission statement. Review the questions from Chapter 1 as a guide. Additionally, answer the following questions:

1. *How do you want people to describe you?*
2. *Who do you want to be?*
3. *What makes your life really worth living?*
4. *If you were awarded a lifetime achievement award, what would you want that award to be for?*

SAMPLE TEMPLATE

My mission is to use my (passion/abilities/positive personality traits) to achieve _____ based on my (values). I will do this by ...[specific behaviors you will use to live by these values]."

ACTION STEPS



Understanding Core Values

Values are the beliefs and ideas that are important to us and give us purpose or meaning in our lives. Everyone has their own set of unique values that may change over time. Our values are like an internal navigation system, guiding and leading us. As a former client said to me, '**values are the lights on our runway**'.

Where Do Your Values Come From?


Some values will serve you as you lead your life, others may hinder you. Some values will be fixed in your life and rigid. Others may be more fluid. Some have higher priority to us and are our core values. Others are less important. Some of your values were handed down to you by family members while others will come with experience. Some of your values will stay with you throughout your entire life. Some will change as your life changes.

You Define and Demonstrate Your Values Differently from Others

Everyone has their own set of unique values. Even if two people happen to choose the same value, each individual will define it in their own way. Each person will demonstrate it differently in his/her daily actions and language.

Understanding your values will help you understand what drives your behavior. They influence us every day. They are our roadmap. They will help you set goals for your life and your career. When life seems unsure, your values will lead the way.



Sometimes, I have to  remind myself that I don't have to do what everyone else is doing.

- Unknown



I am looking for a dare  to be great situation.

- Lloyd Dobbler from the movie Say Anything

- Identify 5-10 values that are the most important to you.
- If you are having difficulty narrowing them down, consider the following questions: What is really important to me about that? Could I live without it?
- Rank the values in order of importance for you. Now define each value, write a few words or phrase that captures what the value means to you. Be as specific as you can.
- Reference the list below for some ideas and add your own.

Partial Values List

Accomplishment	Flexible Hours	Pleasure
Advancement	Friendship	Power
Adventure	Fun	Predictability
Affiliation	Harmony	Recognition
Artistic Expression	Health	Respect
Authority	Helping	Responsibility
Autonomy	High Earnings	Risk-taking
Balance	Honesty	Self-Discipline
Beauty	Humility	Self-Restraint
Challenge	Independence	Service
Community	Influence	Socialization/Interaction
Competence	Integrity	Spirituality
Competition	Justice	Stability
Contribution	Knowledge	Status
Control	Leadership	Structure
Cooperation	Learning	Travel Opportunities
Creativity	Love	Team Work
Curiosity	Loyalty	Trust
Diversity	Meaning	Variety
Duty	Moderation	Wisdom
Faith	Nature	
Family	Obligation	

Creating Goals

Changes in life and career will necessitate changes to our short-term goals and potentially long-term goals. It is a process that should be a regular part of our lives.

In the last chapter we identified our values. Knowing your values will set the stage for your goal setting. To be successful in achieving your goals, you need them to be **relevant** to your life and the bigger vision you want to achieve. You may ask, “How is my career in alignment with my values and what’s important to me? What shifts do I need to make in my career to be more in alignment?”

With the answers above, brainstorm some goals you want to achieve in your career. Place no judgement on them right now. Just brainstorm the first 5-10 that come to mind.

Review Your Goals

- Which are the most meaningful goals to you?
- How will you feel if you achieve this particular goal?
- What impact will it have on you?
- What if you don’t achieve it?



Have you thought about what you'll be doing in five years' time? Do you know what you want to have achieved by the end of the day? Setting goals gives your life direction, and boosts your motivation and self-confidence. Without goals you lack focus and direction.

Change is Inevitable

Select the goal or goals you want to focus on first. Evaluate the one you chose. Write down why this goal is important to you. Spend some time thinking, is this really the goal you want to focus your time and effort on in the upcoming months/years? Does this seem worthwhile? Is this the right time?



Behavior change is hard! Lasting behavior change requires new processes. The behavior you are trying to change did not happen overnight. Therefore the change cannot happen overnight.

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.
- H. Jackson Brown Jr.

Make Broad Goals Specific

Now that you have your broad goal, we need to get specific. A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished. Focus is a powerful force. A broad goal is, for example: I want to be happy in my career. Instead try a specific goal, for example: I want to identify my strengths and understand how I can best utilize them in my current career. A broad goal: I want to be successful in my career. A specific goal, I want to receive three positive recommendations from peers on my annual performance evaluation.

Choose Both Outcome and Process Goals

Is your goal an outcome goal or a process goal? An Outcome Goal focuses on the results. For example: I want to lose 20 pounds by August 1. A Process Goal focuses on completing a set of actions. These actions will hopefully lead to the positive outcomes. For example: I will replace two of my daily snacks with a fruit/vegetable. Both types of goals are important, however, process goals can help you change behaviors for the long-term.



Here's an example of a Process goal: I want to review my performance with my boss in the first week of every month next year. Process goals help you form sustaining behavior changes – habits – that have a lasting impact and help create positive outcomes. Take some time to revisit your goals to identify if it is a Process or Outcome goal and choose the right type for you.

Cases Where Positive Goals are Better Than Negative

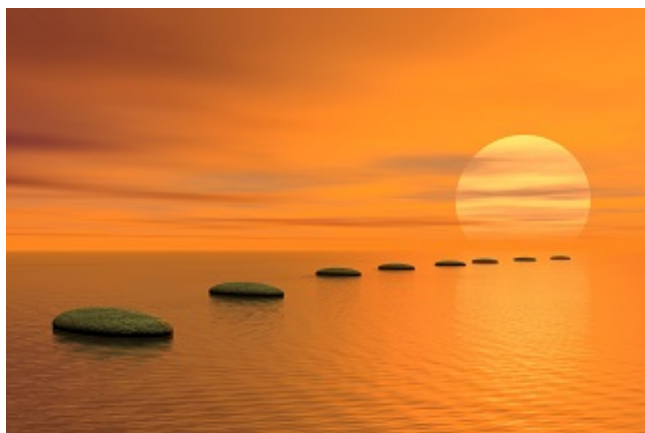
Is your goal written as a positive goal or a negative goal? Meaning, are they goals you can perform vs. things you need to avoid? If you define your goals in a negative way, you are creating an absence of behavior rather than a new behavior or process to learn. For example, hating my job less is a negative goal. Your brain can't learn to hate your job less. A positive goal would be identifying ways that you enjoy your job and working with your manager to implement more of those activities in your day-to-day life. Focus your goals on actions you can take rather than avoid, positive instead of negative.

Goals Must Be Measurable, Timely, & Realistic

- **Measurable** - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. How will you know you have accomplished the goal?
- **Timely** - A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency. Add a timeframe in to each goal you set.
- **Attainable/Realistic/Achievable** – Now that you have listed out your specific goal, the measurements and time frame, take another moment to evaluate it. Does it seem realistic? Is it Achievable? What changes are needed to make the goal seem more realistic? Set yourself up for success from the very beginning.



"If the wind will not serve, take to the oars." – Latin Proverb



"I don't focus on what I'm up against. I focus on my goals and I try to ignore the rest."

- Venus Williams

Prepare for Obstacles Along the Way

Obstacles are opportunities to solve problems. But they can stop us dead in our tracks if we don't plan for them. We can't plan for all obstacles, but let's look at potential obstacles to achieving your goals right now and list them out. You may think of time, money, etc. But also consider temptations as an obstacle. Your goal may be to change your career path, but what if your boss offers you a \$5,000 bonus? This might not change your mind about your career, but may cause you to lose focus on the goal.

Keep in Mind: behavior change is hard! The behavior you are trying to change did not happen overnight. Therefore the change cannot happen overnight. Failures and setbacks in achieving your goals will happen. They are not a sign of weakness. They are part of your process to change behavior. New obstacles and barriers you haven't considered may come up along the way. I tell my clients this is a process of two steps forward, and one step back. Even if you experience a set-back, you are farther ahead than when you started. You may need to update timelines or choose to work on a different goal to get back on track. The key is to learn from your failure. If you do experience systemic failure while trying to achieve your goal, you might need to explore it more deeply to see if this is a goal you should be pursuing at this time.

- Finish writing out your career goals making sure they are specific, measurable, time bound and realistic.
- For each goal, answer the following questions: what will it feel like when you achieve your goal? How will your life be different when you achieve your goal?

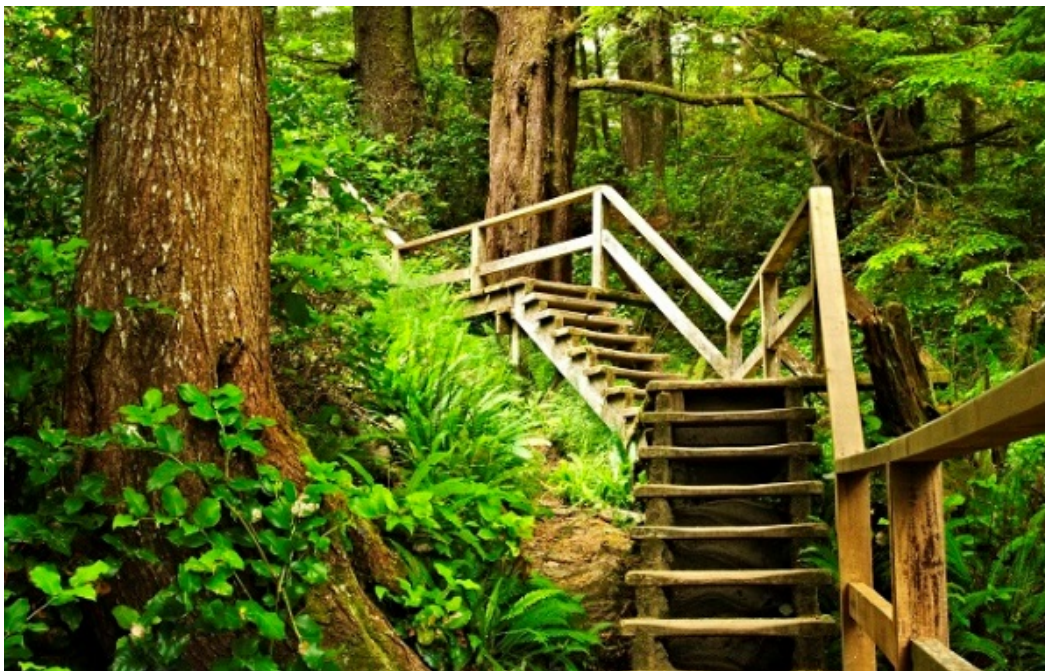
ACTION STEPS



Action Steps

In the last chapter you listed the goals you want to achieve. You now know your goals. So what actions are necessary to get there? We need to get even more specific. What are each of the action steps you need to accomplish your goal? Typically every goal is broken down into several action steps you can take to move you closer to completing your goal. Individuals cannot typically achieve a goal in one large step. It needs to be broken down into smaller steps.

Action Steps will allow you to take a large and sometimes overwhelming task and break it into small, achievable bites. It goes back to the question, *“How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.”* Action steps will allow you to measure your progress toward the overall goal and pivot more easily if you need to.



Whether you think you can, or you think you can't--you're right. ∞∞
- Henry Ford

Short-term Goal Action Plan. Define S.M.A.R.T. Goal:

- What are some obstacles that could get in my way?
- How can I overcome these obstacles?
- What external resources will I need to accomplish my goal?
- What daily habit you will add, change or sacrifice in order to meet your goal?
- What visual reminders can I implement to help me with this change?
- Who will you enlist (an advocate) to keep you accountable and help you achieve your goal?
- Who might you be an advocate to as they are working on their goal?

ACTION STEPS

1. Define your 1st S.M.A.R.T. Goal.
2. Answer the questions on the left for your goal.
3. Complete the chart below to fill in your Action Items for the goal.
4. Repeat process for each of your goals.

The big secret in life, is there is no big secret. Whatever your goal, you can get there if you are willing to work.
- Oprah Winfrey

Action	Due Date	Measurement	Notes

Managing Your Plan

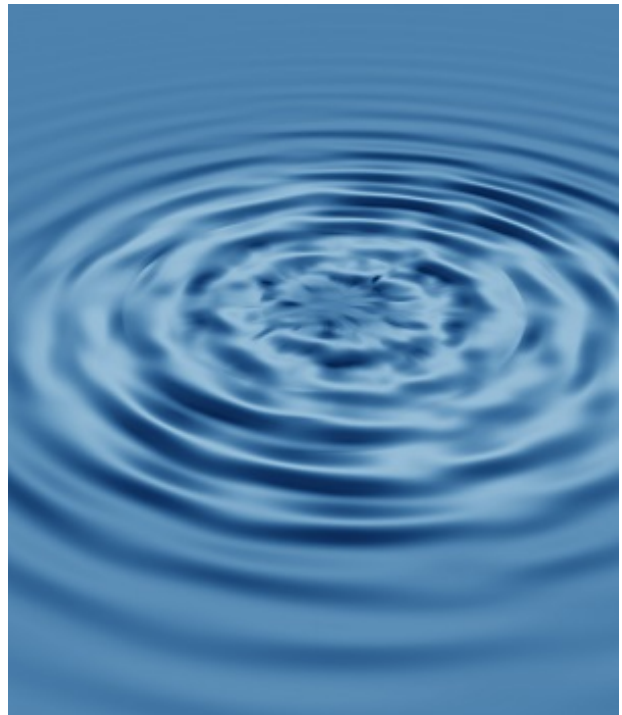
Phew! We typically feel a sense of relief when we finish creating our plan to take the next step in our career. The information is out of our head, there is clarity in our next steps and we are ready to go. The work continues now in our actions – we need to execute on the plan.

The Plan

The first thing to consider is how are we going to document our plan? [Chapter 5](#) listed out a sample chart you can use in Word, Excel, a journal, etc. However, some of you might not like the chart or using Word, Excel or a journal as a tool. The most important part of actively managing a plan is to find a way to document your plan that works for you!

Some want it in an app. Some want it in a system that aligns with their calendar. Some want a system that provides them with reminders. Some need a system that includes motivating quotes along with action steps. Some like pen and paper and get satisfaction from writing it free-hand. Wonderful! They all work.

Find the one that works for you. If you try to use a system that does not feel comfortable for you, you are less likely to want to work on it.



The most important part in executing your plan, is to find a method that works for you.

Actively Managing the Plan

How are going to actively manage our plan? It is easy to get caught up in our everyday lives. Life is busy. So how will you ensure you continue to take steps to turn your plan into action?


Some people, like me, need to actually schedule time on our calendars to make it happen. I put aside a specific time each week to work on personal and professional development. I treat it like an appointment and try not to 'overwrite' the time with something that seems more pressing. Others will put a 15 minute 'check-in' on their calendar for two times a week to hold themselves accountable for making progress. Some will hire a coach to help them execute on the plan. They need the external accountability to help them turn the plan into a reality. Not to sound like a broken record, but **the most important part** in executing your plan, is to find a method that works for you! If you try to use a method that doesn't work for you, even if it works for hundreds of others, you will likely fail. You may need to try different methods to see what works for you, but identifying the method that will work is the first step with success.

You Are Not Alone

As you begin executing your plan, remember you are not alone. This is the time to engage your support network. Take some time to understand how your support network can help you.

Some individuals could act as 'encouragers' for you. You could enlist them to send you an email a few times a month with encouraging words. Others could act as accountability partners for you. They could hold you accountable for meeting your action steps. Others could be mentors (official or unofficial) who provide you with advice and their experience.

People want to help you be successful. They are engaged in your life. Let them know how they can help and what roles they can play. Through the support of others, you will be able to accomplish your goals.

*What if I fail? Oh 
but my darling,
what if you fly?
- Erin Hanson*



Barriers You May Need to Overcome

You will encounter barriers in your path to success. They may be internal barriers. Your Inner Critic is the voice in your head that provides you with unhelpful messages like: you cannot do this, who are you to think you can achieve that, you aren't smart enough, you aren't young enough, etc.

You may also encounter external factors that you had not considered. In executing your plan, you may experience a life event (birth, illness, job layoff, move to a new city) that causes some of your actions steps to be altered. Or you could experience another external event out of your control: a big part of your industry moves out of the city you live in, the education requirements for your career change, etc. Change will occur. It is inevitable. So what do you do?

First assess if this new factor is in your control or out of your control. If it is in your control, what can you do? What changes/alterations do you need to make to your plan to account for it? If the new factor is out of your control, how do you mitigate the change? Review your plan. What impact does the new factor have on it? What needs to change? This may cause you to do more research, but you are still taking action toward your goal.

Staying flexible and being able to adapt to change is a key component of any plan. We know in life the only constant is change. So build in the thought that your path may wind down a few roads you hadn't anticipated. It will be a journey and being adaptable and flexible will allow to accomplish your goals with less stress.

It's not what you achieve, it's what you overcome. That's what defines your career.
- Carlton Fisk





*The best way
to predict the
future is to
create it.* ∞∞
- Abraham Lincoln

This is Your Career. YOURS! What Will You Do with It?

Many of us will be in the workforce for 40 years or more. What will your path be? We cannot change the past, but we have a direct influence on the future of our career. It may not be an easy path. You will encounter obstacles. What will you do with those obstacles? Who will you call in to help you navigate those obstacles?

Don't wait on other people to offer you the opportunities you seek. Spend the time to understand what you truly want to do and take the steps to get there. What steps will you start doing or stop doing in the next 30 days to get you closer to your career goals? Make a list. Start there.

Get Your Motivation Ready

What will be your source of motivation when the road gets hard? Put that motivation system in place now (postings on your mirror, meditation, mantras, music) before it gets hard. Have it readily available for when you truly need it. As I mentioned in [Chapter 2](#), one of the best sources of motivations I heard lately is from an individual who uses her career goal as her computer password. She types it in every morning to get into her computer. Every day. It keeps her motivated and focused on the future.

Everyone who has worked with me knows they will leave a session with me with homework, steps you can take to have an immediate impact on your career. Your homework, if you choose to accept it, is to complete the action steps in this ebook. Take the time. Make the investment in yourself to determine your path. We make investments in so many people and so many things. Carve out some time to **make the investment in you**.

I have helped hundreds and hundreds of individuals learn how to take ownership over their careers. You can do it. I believe in you!

About the Author



Amy Wolfgang is a Career Development and Leadership Coach, the CEO of Wolfgang Career Coaching and a co-founder of Coaching 4 Good. She works with both organizations and individuals with a focus on transforming lives, careers and communities. Amy holds a Master's Degree in Educational Psychology from The University of Texas at Austin, is a certified Professional in Career Management (PCM), certified in The Leadership Circle Profile and completed the Playing Big Facilitators Training with Tara Mohr.

Find out more about Amy and subscribe to her blog at the following places:

www.linkedin.com/in/coachwolfgang

www.wolfgangcareercoaching.com

www.coaching4good.com

Can you imagine a future where most individuals are engaged in their work? Can you imagine what that could do for their lives and communities? I can. I am passionate about the work we do everyday and this movement we are creating. It isn't just for the individuals we work with... the impact will be much greater.

- Amy Wolfgang

Leadership and Career Development Coach

Appendix



Your Career Management

This book discussed the key components for individuals to own their careers. Career Management is a continuous process of making sure your career is the best it can be today, tomorrow and in the years to come. We represent this process by a set of six gears that drive your career.

The Career Management gear, in the center, turns only when all the surrounding six gears turn. So too, you are truly managing your career only when you are working on all six areas. If you are neglecting even one gear then your career becomes stagnant and you aren't achieving your full potential and you aren't properly prepared for the future. Read on to understand each gear in more detail or visit our [methodology page on wolfgangcareercoaching.com](http://methodology.page.on.wolfgangcareercoaching.com).



Goal Setting

Goal Setting is the fundamental part of your Career Management. Your work needs to start there. Out of those goals, you will recognize additional work that needs to be done.

Explore

Some of that work will be a dive inward to understand your values, interests, personality, skills, behaviors and how those relate to your career. The **exploration** process starts with knowing yourself.



Discover

Working towards your goals may involve research to **discover** careers and understand the job market demands and skills required which influence your career decision making process.



Brand

Establishing and broadcasting your professional **brand** is done by advocating and promoting your skills, experience, and traits via resumes, interviewing, networking and social media.

Strategy

Implementing your action plans, whether for job search, promotion or goal attainment requires a personalized **strategy** that represents who you are and the career you want.



Career Development

Career Development is the lifelong career management process. It can include acquiring new skills, identifying internal and external barriers to success, developing as a leader or addressing workplace dynamics impacting your career.