

Paula Caligiuri, Ph.D.

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GET A  
LIFE

94,365 Hours of Your Life Are Spent Working...

NOT A  
JOB

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Do What You Love and Let  
Your Talents Work For You

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## introduction

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The way to achieve career success has changed so dramatically in recent years that much of the advice offered in schools, companies, and even homes—by well-meaning counselors, managers, parents, spouses, and friends—is outdated. *Get a Life, Not a Job* offers you a new approach to your relationship with work, a way to invest in and grow your career in a way that will enable you to achieve financial security while freeing yourself from any one employer that, frankly, might not have a job for you tomorrow.

Although some elements in the formula for career success have endured, such as conscientiousness, reliability, performance excellence, and possession of valuable skills, many of the elements for career success have, indeed, changed. *Get a Life, Not a Job* is based on the new employment reality and the real dynamics of today's world of work.

*Get a Life, Not a Job* is a guide to designing your life that includes your career—expanding and creating new career-related activities *purposefully* to do more of what you enjoy and in the way you want to engage with your career. It shows you how to find multiple income-creating and wealth-producing activities that offer you more excitement, fulfillment, and security. The approach offers you tremendous personal and financial freedom because you are not relying on one source of income and your destiny is not tied to that of your employer's.

What do *you* call income-creating activities that are stimulating, desirable, enjoyable, balanced, dynamic, exciting, financially rewarding, and liberating—other than a “winning lottery ticket,” a “large trust fund,” or a “delusion”? I call them **career acts**. **Career acts** are simultaneous and stimulating profitable activities composed of what people (who enjoy what they do) engage in for a living.

## Why Now Is the Best Time to Get a Life, Not a Job

I wrote this book because too many people today are unhappy with their employment situation, unsure of what to do after college, currently unemployed, or disillusioned by their career or the occupation they selected. In today's employment reality, employees are less able to predict their professional futures than ever before—and this lack of predictability and uncertainty has been causing unprecedented levels of stress among employees. *Would it surprise you that in a recent survey of Americans, almost 80% of the recently unemployed received less than three weeks in advance warning—among them, 60% received no advance warning that they were to be unemployed?*<sup>1</sup> Yikes!

As almost everyone who is currently working knows, this “career plan” or *psychological contract* with employers is obsolete and largely a fool's mission for those who still expect it with most firms in today's employment reality. Dr. Denise Rousseau, a leader in research on the psychological contract, defines it as *an individual's belief in mutual obligations between that person and another party, such as an employer.*<sup>2</sup> Over the course of the past couple of decades, the psychological contract between employers and employees has clearly changed in one important way: Employers have no long-term commitment to their employees and employees have no long-term commitment to their employers. Employers provide income and benefits in return for employees' high performance. There are no guarantees that there will be a job in the future, just as there is no expectation that you will stay with the organization if there is a better opportunity for you elsewhere. It's understandable that some American employees might be nostalgic for the old psychological contract that seemed to offer long-term financial security, stability, and benefits. But, frankly, there is no evidence that it will ever return.

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Compared with employees, it seems that employers are far more comfortable with today's new psychological contract. Employers can now leverage a variety of cost-effective employment configurations, including the hiring of part-time employees, independent contractors, and contingent workers—and the moving of manufacturing, semi-skilled, and professional jobs to countries where labor costs are low. These new employment configurations have helped firms become more competitive in today's global economy by offering employers financial flexibility in their wage bills. However, what might be good for corporate bottom lines might not be the best thing for employees' careers.

Please don't misunderstand me: I am *not* against business. There are, in fact, many fine organizations out there that are finding it tougher to compete globally and need to use a greater variety of lower-cost employment configurations to remain competitive.<sup>3</sup> Companies understand and leverage the new psychological contract because of the competitive pressures they face. On the other hand, employees, for the most part, do not fully comprehend the speed at which the contract has changed and is continuing to change. To level the playing field, *Get a Life, Not a Job* highlights these changes; I want you to fully understand the new employment reality so you can effectively navigate it. Above all, I want you to own your own career destiny because that is what this new psychological contract demands.

*What is generally understood about the current psychological contract?* Employees have grown comfortable with the idea of changing employers, but many still seek full-time positions with consecutive organizations. Rather than commitment to any one organization, we have convinced ourselves that by “staying marketable,” we will be desired (and hopefully courted) by future employers. We are, in many ways, trying to re-create the old psychological contract in a serial sense, across successive employers (that is, *if I perform well in my*

*field, I'll be employed long-term*). Part of this statement is true, but only if you possess the most highly sought-out skills.

If you are working, and are like most people, you spend time while in your current job thinking about your next job. But, unfortunately, the macro psychological contract that underlies the logic of employability across sequential employers exists only for a small percentage of people in key positions or occupations within certain industries. For most, you are not in control of your career because maintaining predictable marketability in a dynamic employment system is very difficult. This is the new reality.

I propose that we break this cycle: Rather than a preoccupation with whether you'll have a job tomorrow, where to work next, and what your next employer might want to see on your résumé, I suggest you *own your career destiny* by crafting financially rewarding activities that place your interests, needs, talents, and motivators above those of your next employer.

I propose that you continually develop yourself for the work activities that you, not your hypothetical next employer, want to have in your career. When coupled with action to engage in these personally rewarding, income-generating alternatives, this new psychological contract offers a highly attractive degree of freedom. You can work for others while maintaining a commitment and loyalty to yourself and your own professional development. You can leverage the benefits of the new psychological contract by creating your own options—simultaneous, stimulating, and secure career acts.

You can now *get a life, not a job*.

## Those Who Have Lives, Not Jobs

People who enjoy what they do for a living tend to *own* their careers in the sense that they themselves have planned, developed, and shifted their career focus to create the stimulating, secure, and balanced work situations they desire. They craft the career acts they like the best, over time. They also have tailored for themselves a sense of financial security by knowing that if one aspect of their career is losing steam (or interest) other career acts can provide a safety net.

In the past, under the old rules of employment, people with multiple career acts might have been criticized for “lacking focus” and “being too easily distracted.” Not anymore. In today’s employment reality, these individuals are the happiest career professionals I’ve met because they own their career destiny and do not feel beholden to any one employer. Let’s meet a few so you can visualize their working lives:

- Beverly edits books for a mainstream publisher and writes her own mystery novels. In addition to being a writer, Beverly is a tour guide giving tours at a local winery and lighthouse. Not surprisingly, her mysteries and romances are often set at a vineyard or near a lighthouse. In Beverly’s case, one career act inspires the other.
- David is a graphic designer and a photographer, with a following among musicians and actors. As a voice-over professional himself, his photography has brought him in the circles of those in the entertainment industry. In David’s case, one career act opens the door for another.
- Erin is a successful massage therapist at a gym, a career act she loves. To extend her interest in healing and anatomy, she is also studying to be a chiropractor with a goal to open a private practice. In Erin’s case, one career act is helping to fund a future career act.

## GET A LIFE, NOT A JOB

Like Beverly, David, and Erin, those who are happiest with their careers tend to have multiple sources of income and professional stimulation. They are like you, me, and most people.

Throughout this book, I offer cases of many people who have outstanding careers through their multiple, fulfilling career acts. They run the gamut on almost every dimension, age, education, family situation, and so on. They share a love for what they do for a living. As you will read, their lives are enviable and inspirational—but also highly motivating in their honesty. They provide the evidence that all of us can attain fulfilling lives with multiple career acts. I am inspired by the people profiled in *Get a Life, Not a Job* and hope you will be too.

When you read the profiles of these people, you will notice that some of them work for themselves and some work for others—other organizations, both small and large. The goal of a fulfilling career might be easiest to achieve through entrepreneurial activities because they offer the greatest personal control, but career fulfillment is also possible when you work for an employer full-time. Being an entrepreneur is wonderful for many, but not right for everyone. Thus, although working for yourself can be liberating, *Get a Life, Not a Job* is not a book about starting your own business or finding sources of passive income.

I wrote this book because I have personally enjoyed the benefits of my own stimulating income-creating career acts—and want you to enjoy the same level of professional and financial freedom. I wrote this book because one of my own career acts is “writing books.”

A brief sketch of my career acts begins with my occupational field, work psychology: I hold a PhD in industrial and organizational psychology (i.e., work psychology) from Pennsylvania State University. I am a Full Professor of Human Resource Management at Rutgers University in New Jersey (career act #1). After completing my degree and before starting to teach at Rutgers, I developed some international



career-related tools that I now use in conjunction with my career counseling practice (career act #2). Over ten years ago, I began a more public side of my career, writing books (career act #3) and giving talks in corporate, military, and nonprofit environments (career act #4).

*Do I sound busy?*<sup>9</sup> My friends and family members tease me that it seems like I “*never work*” (and I promise that it is not because I am particularly well organized). The truth is I have no idea how many hours per week I “work” because I have crafted my career acts, over time, to include the activities I enjoy, shedding those acts that are not engaging or not designed to move me in the direction of a different, more stimulating career act. More than believing that I print money in my basement, my friends and family members can observe that I have work-life balance, financial and professional freedom, and truly enjoy what I do.

## You Too Can Get a Life

Developing great career acts for overall career success is a process, not an outcome. The ability to decide when to shed a career act, when to grow a career act, or when to start a new career act is part of what makes this new approach to managing your career fulfilling, stimulating, and secure.

I do not advocate working longer hours, nor do I want to see you worsen your work-life balance by trying to do multiple time-consuming jobs. What I do advise is for you to devote more energy to building desired or ideal career acts, or one amazing career act, to achieve greater fulfillment. If you have ever worked on a project you found interesting, you know the joy and energy the right career act can give you. Multiple career acts are liberating because they enable you to allocate your time across those career acts you enjoy and shed those career acts you don't enjoy.

## GET A LIFE, NOT A JOB

Career acts also supply a stress-easing sense of security that comes from knowing if one act of your work-life becomes stale or disappears entirely (as we have seen in many corporate downsizings) that you have other sources of stimulation and income. Your career becomes more nimble and less stressful as your attention can be redirected positively, for personal and financial gain.

The book was written as a step-by-step guide to help you achieve financial and personal freedom. Chapter 1 begins by helping you identify possible income-creating activities that would be liberating and help you make a plan for shedding those you don't enjoy. Chapter 2 helps you discover what motivates you and how you like to work to continually align your career with activities you truly enjoy. Chapter 3 discusses how to build your skills and abilities to advance into more progressively interesting career acts. Chapter 4 specifically focuses on how to make your career acts (or a single career act) as financially and professionally secure as possible from being downsized. Chapter 5 discusses how to bolster your mental, emotional, and physical well-being to manage concurrent career acts. Chapter 6 discusses how you can gain control of your career by effectively leveraging your time, money, and human resources. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes *Get a Life, Not a Job* with some ways to clarify your work-related values and to keep your personal relationships healthy and satisfying while you pursue your career acts.

*Get a Life, Not a Job* is all about you, a way for you to create a plan to reach your ultimate career goal—enjoying as close to 100% of what you do for a living as possible. I hope you benefit from the insights in this book and have a few “aha!” moments that you can apply to your own career, whether you are currently starting your career, restarting your career, or jump-starting your career.

## INTRODUCTION

I look forward to hearing your stories about your career acts; please visit [www.PaulaCaligiuri.com](http://www.PaulaCaligiuri.com) to share your career stories with me. With exciting updates every week and new free career tools posted frequently, I invite you to sign up for e-mail updates, to follow me on Twitter (@PaulaCaligiuri), or to become a fan on Facebook (Paula Caligiuri).

Wishing you great happiness in your career success,

**Paula Caligiuri, Ph.D.**

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# Create a Personally, Professionally, and Financially Rewarding Career Doing What You Love

*“There is no passion to be found playing small—in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.”*

**Nelson Mandela**

Bobby and Tess have multiple career acts. Tess is a nanny during the day and loves to engage in her hobby of photography in the evenings and on weekends. Exciting for Tess, her evening and weekend fun has become increasingly profitable, so she has been gradually cutting back her hours as a nanny. Bobby, her husband, is an IT professional by day. As a second career act, Bobby is a Web designer under retainer to a major corporation, keeping the company’s pages current, interactive, and brilliant. He also designs Web pages for others, including one for his wife’s photography business. Happy with the way their careers are growing, the couple also reached a personal milestone recently when they bought their first house. Some might think that Tess and Bobby are stretched thin and might experience stress from all they have in motion in their lives. *Would you be surprised to learn that Bobby and Tess are not experiencing stress, even with a new mortgage and a currently shaky economy?*<sup>9</sup> In fact, they credit their multiple career acts with providing them great security in their careers and less stress as they engage in the things they enjoy. Bobby and Tess are busy, and probably could not tell you what was happening in the latest reality TV

show, but they are also highly fulfilled doing what they love across their multiple career acts. They are happy as a couple.

The idea of multiple career acts might seem daunting at first. Chances are high, however, that you are already balancing multiple roles in your life. Let's consider the person who has a job and children and provides life care to a family member. This person is already doing the equivalent of three roles. *Are you a student, parent, hobbyist, employee, partner, caregiver, coach, and so on?* This idea of having multiple roles in your life isn't such a huge departure from what most people already do; the idea is just being applied to your career.

The departure, if you will, is allowing yourself to reframe your relationship with work and what you consider the best way to approach career fulfillment. Under the old rules of employment, people with multiple career acts would be chastised by parents, a spouse, or a nosy mother-in-law for "not having a professional focus," "not being serious about your job," "not sticking with it," and "being too distracted." (Ugh!) In today's employment reality, the happiest career professionals allow their talents across multiple career acts to propel their success and security. They confidently ignore these criticisms because they are changing career acts purposefully, and not spinning their wheels hoping for an employer to provide a situation they will find satisfying. They are happy and confident because they are doing what they love and owning their career destiny. *They have lives and not jobs.*

Your career is a large, influential, and time-consuming part of your life. Throughout your adult years, prior to retirement, you will spend almost half your waking hours in work-related activities. If you start working at age 20 and retire at age 65, you will spend 45 years of your life working. You will have, on average, 241 workdays each year and

## CREATE A PERSONALLY, PROFESSIONALLY, AND FINANCIALLY REWARDING CAREER

each of those days will include 8.7 hours of actual work<sup>1</sup> for 2,097 hours of work each year. What sane person would want to be unhappy or feel insecure for that much of his or her adult life? Unfortunately, many are.

There are approximately 152 million Americans working in the U.S. labor force today. On any given day, 75% of them would consider changing jobs. In fact, over 60 million of them are actively looking for a new job at this moment. *Are you one of them?* With the downturn in the economy, the elimination of jobs, and the increased desire for work-life balance, people are looking for more stability, greater fulfillment, and increased satisfaction from work. *Are you?*

### HAVE MULTIPLE CAREER ACTS AND...

- ✓ Your career will be managed by you.
- ✓ Your career will be built on what you love to do—your talents, interests, needs, and motivators.
- ✓ You will have multiple exciting and professionally stimulating career acts, well integrated into the life you want to live.
- ✓ You will have more freedom because you will not be locked into any one job or employer.
- ✓ You will have a greater work-life balance.
- ✓ You will have greater financial freedom and security.
- ✓ You will be in control of your future.

## Do You Need More Personal and Professional Freedom in Your Life?

*Is it time for you to redesign your career—and your life—for greater personal and professional freedom?* To answer this question, you need only to think about Sunday night. The way you feel on Sunday nights could be telling you volumes about your relationship with work. *Are you filled with dread for Monday morning? Moody? Anxious? Overwhelmed? Depressed? Are you crankier than you were on Saturday night?* If so, you might be experiencing the Sunday night slump. The source of your Sunday night slump will provide some insight into the relationship you have with work and what might need to change to be more fulfilled in your career. Let's think first about the possible source of the slump:

- *Are you dreading the boredom or monotony of the workweek?*
- *Do you dislike the climate, culture, or people within your work group?*
- *Are you overloaded and overwhelmed with the amount of work that needs to be accomplished?*

*If you are experiencing this, what is your level of Sunday night slump?* Even those who have engaging and stimulating careers might experience some of these feelings on Sunday evening as they temporarily mourn the loss of their freedom. If your slump is easily mitigated with an episode of *Desperate Housewives*, a football game, or a bowl of Ben & Jerry's shared with a friend, then your reactions are probably not too extreme but are likely telling you that you need to make some changes.

For some of you, the Sunday night slump is more serious. In a poll conducted by Monster Worldwide,<sup>2</sup> over 80% of American and British workers have trouble sleeping on Sunday nights. In addition to



insomnia, if Sunday evenings predictably bring more arguments with loved ones, a loss of interest in the things you normally enjoy, and difficulty concentrating, then your Sunday night mood might suggest that something in your life needs to change and you should reframe your relationship with the concept of work.

Please don't ignore these feelings as they are telling you something important about how you are living a big part of your life—and life is too short to be unhappy or unfulfilled in your work life. Allow those Sunday night feelings to help you uncover whether it is time to change your employer, change your job, or transfer to a more satisfying work situation—a multiple-act career.

## Why Do So Many People Remain in Unfulfilling Jobs?

*“I hate my job.”* As a career coach, these crushing words will easily launch me into a sympathetic series of rapid-fire questions, with the answers providing the foundation for what I hope will be a creative problem-solving discussion. You're not alone if you feel you are toiling in an unfulfilling job now, with the only hope of someday retiring to start living a more-fulfilling life. The assumption on which the concept of retirement is based—that we need to defer our life's happiness until we reach our senior years—is unfortunate and growing increasingly more illogical under the new psychological contract. *Why do you feel the need to defer your happiness?* Given the change in the psychological contract, without promises for the future return, this delayed-fulfillment approach seems even more absurd. Yet, I have learned, there are reasons why people stay in jobs they hate.

Discussing creative solutions to career fulfillment produces responses on the following continuum: At one extreme, there are the life-is-too-short-to-be-unhappy-at-work folks. They want to approach

their careers with fresh eyes. Many (but certainly not all) of them are young adults and those reentering the workforce. The conversation with people at this end of the continuum is always enjoyable, creative, and solution focused. These folks have minimal career-related baggage and want to be happy with whatever they opt to do for a living. They are optimistic and willing to explore possibilities for their careers.

At the other extreme, there are the yes-I-hate-my-job-but-that-is-why-they-call-it-*work* folks. They want to get out of the rut they are in, but have convinced themselves that this is where they need to remain. Many (but not all) of them are experienced and well-trained mid-career or late-career folks. They tend to be bound to an outdated employment scenario that no longer exists. They carry career-related baggage and are pessimistic about exploring options, often not even giving themselves the luxury of daydreaming about other career possibilities.

The latter end of the continuum has taught me much about why people remain in unfulfilling jobs. The five most common reasons are as follows:

- **Financial responsibility**—*“I cannot change jobs now; I make too much money and it would be too difficult to find something at my level. I have too many expenses to ever take the financial risk.”* You immediately conjure up the image of an investment banker who is joining the Peace Corps, don’t you? The truth is that job changes do not need to be a financial step back, but they might require some planning and preparation so you do not jump before you are ready. When I hear this comment, it tends to be the case that the person is overextended financially and they need their steady current income to pay bills. Any thought of giving that up (even with a new job lined up) becomes an overly daunting financial risk. If you find yourself in this position, try to work on two things concurrently: One, try to get your personal finances under control so you can mentally give

yourself license to make career-related choices that are both financially rewarding and fulfilling. Two, develop a budget for the action plan necessary for changing your career.

- **Retention incentives**—“*I only have two more years before I am fully vested in the pension program. I can suffer through anything for a few more years.*” The human resources practices designed to encourage retention often work. This is great news for companies hoping to lower their costs to train new workers. This is also great news for those who make it to the goal line with the company and can reap the financial reward in retirement. This is a personal decision regarding whether it is worth it—your call. I’d highly recommend beginning a side career while you, literally, finish “doing your time.” If you hate your current job that much, you might feel out of control, and starting a new career act can be both financially rewarding when you make it to the corporate finish line and will be emotionally satisfying, putting you back in control of your career and your future.
- **Fear of change and the unknown**—“*I wouldn’t know what to do if I left this job. This is what I know how to do.*” Some people truly fear change. Minimally, as humans, we tend not to like it very much. The most successful people I know fear settling *more* than they fear change. They dislike complacency *more* than they dislike ambiguity. We all vary with respect to our comfort level with change and ambiguity. As an individual difference, it really is not fair for me to offer pithy suggestions in the hopes of turning the most cautious into a career bungee jumper. If you really hate your job (slightly more than you hate change), I would suggest not changing a thing in your current work situation—but, rather, add a small additional career act, rooted in something you love. You can then control when and how (and if ever) your job will change by dedicating more time to this

additional career act. When you feel comfortable and the change no longer produces anxiety, you'll make the leap.

- **Escalation of commitment (or misplaced loyalty)**—  
*“I have worked in this profession for 15 years; I am not about to give up the years I have put in to start over.”*  
*“I have given a lot of myself to this organization.”* These are such retro comments. Sorry for the repetition, but it does warrant repeating. The psychological contract between employers and employees has clearly changed. Employers have no long-term commitment to their employees and employees should feel no sense of long-term commitment to their employers. Your employer owns jobs; you do not. There are no guarantees that “your” job will be there in the future, just as there is no expectation that you will stay with the organization if there is a better opportunity for you elsewhere. There are no gold stars for attendance in this stage of your life. Please move on if you are truly unhappy. There are bound to be better opportunities elsewhere, especially ones you create for yourself.
- **Pessimism**—*“It is naïve to think you can like what you do.”*  
*“I do not believe there are any fulfilling jobs—work is work.”* I feel sorry for those who really believe this is true. If you are not a natural pessimist, the underlying sentiment is usually related to a lack of creativity for your options. This book should help with that and, if you fall into this pessimistic category, I'd suggest you start talking to people who genuinely seem to enjoy what they do for a living. They are out there—but don't take my naïve word for it.

Being fulfilled in your income-generating career activities is critical for your emotional and physical well-being. Life is far too short to spend time in a job you hate, and your happiness does not need to be deferred to your senior years. It is time for you to get a life, not a job.

## Simultaneous Career Acts, Stimulating Options

As a work psychologist and a career counselor, I am well aware that having a satisfying career takes some serious, planned, and purposeful work on your part. Especially during these difficult economic times, giving advice on building and managing careers is rather sobering.

Life is complex, but thinking of your various income-generating activities as career acts *can lead to an exciting, balanced, and fulfilling career, and one with a safety net or two*. I have many rapidly shifting career acts myself, but this isn't about me; *this approach is all about you and finding what fits best in your life for your talents*.

Let's start by having you think of those people in your life whose careers you know well and admire most. *Do their careers possess any of the following features?*

- ✓ **Do they have multiple professional career acts?**—The individuals who have the most fulfilling careers often have jobs across a variety of career acts. Some of these individuals have multiple *related* career acts: the mechanic who rebuilds classic cars for clients, the sous chef who gives cooking classes in her home, the orthopedic surgeon who invents a new prosthetic device, or the aerobics instructor who is a personal trainer. Other individuals have multiple *unrelated* career acts: the nurse who runs a weekend cake-decorating business, the teacher who runs an online antique tools business, or the engineer who owns and manages several rental properties. They each have multiple career acts. Each career act is independent and potentially interesting.
- ✓ **Do they have options in their lives?**—The individuals who are the most free from the bonds of an unhappy job have options in their careers. If you have the ability to leave your company at any time, you earn the right to operate with more freedom and flexibility within the career act. Individuals with multiple career acts tend to

## GET A LIFE, NOT A JOB

not be bound to any one company for their paychecks. They might enjoy their jobs and want to stay with their companies—but they do not need to do so. The difference is exceptionally liberating.

- ✓ **Are they unique and central to the success of their organization?**—The individuals who have the most fulfilling careers are central to their organizations, across their career acts. These individuals tend to have unique skills and personal characteristics that are difficult to replace—and others recognize this. They are critical to the success of the career act or the business—and, again, others recognize this to be true. Those with successful careers are not necessarily the most senior individuals in the organization—or those with the greatest number of degrees—but they do know how they contribute to the organization's success, and they have a realistic sense of their value across each of their professional roles.
- ✓ **Do they talk about their careers in ways that sound stimulating, interesting, and energy giving?**—People who love what they do draw energy from the career acts they are in. Instead of dreading the idea of going to work or working, they actually look forward to it and enjoy it. I promise this is a reality for some people (you might even know a few). I want it to be a reality for you.

Professional and financial freedom has never been as critical as it is today in 2010. As I write this, the unemployment rate in the United States is about 10%. Even during a period of lower unemployment, however, having a multiple-career-act life will enable you to obtain greater fulfillment from work given that the sources of this fulfillment are spread throughout your multiple career acts.

*I do not advocate working longer hours or toiling in multiple jobs.* Multiple dull career acts would still result in a dull (and more stressful) life. I also do not advocate running yourself ragged trying to do multiple jobs (even if they are engaging). I advocate finding multiple income-creating activities that you sincerely enjoy, that fit with your life in a fulfilling, balanced way, and that offer you financial freedom because you are not relying on any one employment setting.

# Finding Your Career Acts

Think of your current primary job (or the one you seek) as career act #1. *Do you have any other income-creating activities in which you engage?* These can be activities such as running an eBay business, working a weekend landscaping job, giving guitar lessons, or selling your paintings at the local art festival. If you have any income-producing activities, outside your primary career act, those are your additional career acts. Use Exercise 1 to think about your own current set of career acts.

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## Exercise 1: Your Current Career Acts

Career act 1 is likely your full-time job or the job that offers your greatest source of income.

Your other career acts are any additional sources of income, such as a part-time job, contract work, an extension of your first career act done in a different venue, a profitable hobby, passive income (for example, from a rental property), and the like.

*What are your current career acts?*

Career act #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Career act #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Career act #3 \_\_\_\_\_

Career act #4 \_\_\_\_\_

Career act #5 \_\_\_\_\_

*On a scale from 1% to 100%, how interesting, fulfilling, or satisfying is each career act?*

Career act #1 \_\_\_\_\_ % interesting

Career act #2 \_\_\_\_\_ % interesting

Career act #3 \_\_\_\_\_ % interesting

Career act #4 \_\_\_\_\_ % interesting

Career act #5 \_\_\_\_\_ % interesting

## GET A LIFE, NOT A JOB

*Adding all lines to 100%, what percent of your total annual income is derived from each career act?*

Career act #1 \_\_\_\_\_% of my total income

Career act #2 \_\_\_\_\_% of my total income

Career act #3 \_\_\_\_\_% of my total income

Career act #4 \_\_\_\_\_% of my total income

Career act #5 \_\_\_\_\_% of my total income

If you are like most people, only the line for career act #1 is filled, and it is only 10% to 50% satisfying—but it accounts for all of your total income. If you have additional career acts, these are likely your most interesting career acts (between 75% to 99%) accounting for less than 10% of your total income. If you filled in career acts #2 and #3, chances are you indicated that your career act #1 provides income while the additional career acts provide only satisfaction. Although that is a reasonable place to start, you probably agree that it is far from the ideal career situation.

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Over time, as you develop your career acts, you will begin to see these indicators shift. Your goal will be to derive more satisfaction from the career act in the center of your life while earning an increasing percentage of your total income from the additional career acts. As you do this, your career will become more stimulating, balanced, and secure. Use Exercise 2 to plot your own income-to-satisfaction ratios for each of your career acts.

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### Exercise 2: Plot Your Satisfaction-to-Income Ratio over Time

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Career Act 1	Now	In 6 Months	After 1 Year	Etc.
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On a scale from 1 to 100, how interesting is this career act?

What percentage of your income is derived from this career act?

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## CREATE A PERSONALLY, PROFESSIONALLY, AND FINANCIALLY REWARDING CAREER

Career Act 2	Now	In 6 Months	After 1 Year	Etc.
On a scale from 1 to 100, how interesting is this career act?				
What percentage of your income is derived from this career act?				
Career Act 3	Now	In 6 Months	After 1 Year	Etc.
On a scale from 1 to 100, how interesting is this career act?				
What percentage of your income is derived from this career act?				

## How to Create a Career with Multiple Career Acts

To begin to develop your multiple career acts, you first need a primary career act—a place to start. This starting point will vary tremendously depending on many factors: the extent to which you are in a current job you enjoy, whether you have the skills you need to start your ideal career, whether there are hurdles for starting your ideal career (e.g., license, degree, training), and so on. In a nutshell, you need to start somewhere while paying your bills—so you might as well begin purposefully.

To start, let's acknowledge that you need to pay the bills. Any would-be actor who has waited tables in anticipation of a big break will attest that you might not be able to experience your most fulfilling

career act immediately. Instead, you need a career act that puts food on the table and keeps the lights on; if it also provides benefits such as insurance and paid vacation, even better. It might be a temporary or seasonal job, a project-based assignment, or an entry-level position, but it is a place to start. This will, over time, generate income and help you start additional career acts by offering a financial base or a platform from which you can develop your skills.

A note of caution is also in order: Although adding a boring part-time job might increase your financial bottom line (and might be a necessary short-term move at some point in your career), this will not lead to greater enjoyment, fulfillment, or balance. A person with an interest in physical fitness might be well suited to begin a career act working at the desk in a health club. Staying in this desk job at the health club without concurrently pursuing a fitness training certificate or a degree in nutrition, however, is not recommended. The best-managed careers acts become progressively more liberating and offer an increased sense of work-life balance. To use a sports metaphor, keep your eye on the ball and continually grow your career acts purposefully.

Your plan for growing your career might vary depending on which of your career acts you are considering. You might be very advanced on one aspect of your career but at the most entry-level stage in another. If you are starting from the beginning on one of your career acts, and have the luxury of spending time pursuing interests, don't shy away from unpaid opportunities because you never know where they can lead. An interest in live theater might motivate someone to take a starter job working in the ticket office at a regional theater. Taking an unpaid internship at a sports magazine or volunteering at an animal shelter are great starter career acts for those with a passion for sports or animals. The venue and being around others who share your passion are great starter career acts—as long as you know how you can grow from there.

*Remember that the concept of a multiple-act career is a process for managing your career, not an end state.*

## Adding Career Acts Ethically

Many people add career acts based on something they have been doing professionally, an extension of their current role, perhaps with another organization. This is common and logical because a current employment situation might have helped you increase your level of expertise and skills. Before discussing how to grow your ideal career generally, let's discuss the ethics of the noncompetition among your career acts—especially if your primary career act is working for an organization. Consider the following five rules for adding career acts ethically:

1. **Avoid conflicts of interest**—Career acts should be, ideally, separate industries so you are not tempted to (or unintentionally) compete with your current employer, independent contracting, or freelancing activities. If your career acts are in the same industry, try the “newspaper test”: *If your career acts were on the front page of the newspaper, would you be embarrassed?*
2. **Do not borrow time, knowledge, or materials**—If it feels as though you are overstepping your bounds “borrowing” from one employer or client site in an effort to build a different career act, you probably are. This might be as seemingly innocuous as checking e-mail for one career act while billing or being paid by another—or it might be as blatant as taking supplies from one career act for use in another. Try the “manager or client test”: *Would you be comfortable telling your manager or client about your activity without any concern?*
3. **Be sure you are not violating your contract**—If you work for one employer or if you signed a contract as an independent contractor or freelancer, your career acts might

be limited (usually with noncompete clauses). Even if you did not sign a contract when you began working, you should check in your organization's policy manual or, more difficult to learn, the expected implicit norms of the organization.

4. **Report income honestly**—If you work for an employer in the United States, you will receive a W-2 form, including your income and some deductions, such as federal and state taxes and Social Security. If you work as an independent contractor, you should receive a 1099 form from each of your clients throughout the year. If you do not receive a 1099 from a given client or organization you should keep a record of income earned and expenses to accurately report your income for tax purposes (for example, if you receive less than \$600 from an organization they do not need to generate a 1099 for you but you will still need to report the income). As an aside, if you do much work outside of traditional employment settings, I would also suggest you speak with a tax professional to be sure you are receiving all of the possible tax deductions.
5. **Do not poach clients**—If you freelance and are employed in the same area where clients would be identical, you might experience a conflict of interest, which could be perceived as poaching clients. As before, try the “manager or client test”: *Would you be comfortable telling your manager about your conversations or work with clients without any concern that he or she would view them as a conflict of interest?*

## Approaches for Adding Career Acts

Now that you know the ground rules for building career acts ethically while working in another organization, you can start to consider different ways to build a more fulfilling career through multiple career acts. The following sections discuss four.

## Approach 1: Leverage Your Expertise or Talents

*What do you do or know that would be valued by others? What is your area of expertise, something you know more about than others? What skills and abilities do you have that you can leverage?* With a little creativity, your answer to any of these questions could provide the foundation for a possible career act. To make the transition, you will want to gain a sense of the possible market demand for what you hope to offer, whatever your income-generating career act might be. Let's look at a couple of examples.

**Jay's career acts**—Jay has worked for over 25 years with the same employer in various consumer electronics engineering roles, an occupation he greatly enjoys. Over the past 8 years, he has worked specifically as the director of quality engineering within the division of a company that does digital image processing. As the director of this unit, he has gained unique expertise in being able to identify the type of device (make, model of a camera, mobile phone, etc.) that has taken a specific photo by being able to interpret encrypted data in the image files. Because of his unique knowledge, Jay was asked to provide some expert testimony on digital photo images that were to be used as evidence in a court case. When Jay accepted the invitation, he found that he enjoyed the courtroom experience and took satisfaction in knowing that he was contributing to the justice system. Jay has now leveraged his expertise into another career act as an expert witness, a person who can provide expert testimony on the source of digital images.

**Dan's career acts**—Dan works full-time as the director of development for a philanthropic organization. In earlier stages of his career, he has worked for a variety of nonprofit organizations where he has been successful in writing and winning large grants. As a volunteer firefighter in his town, he has also written and won grants for his fire company. With a

clear track record of success, Dan has been able to leverage his grant-writing skill into a profitable and fulfilling side business, providing grant-writing services for multiple noncompeting nonprofit organizations that are unable to afford a full-time grant writer.

Jay and Dan both leveraged their expertise and talent, extending their reach to create additional career acts. If you really cannot identify your expertise or talents, ask your friends. Often, others see our talents more clearly than we see them in ourselves.

## Approach 2: Expand a Hobby, Interest, or Passion

*What do you enjoy as a hobby? Do you have any passions or interests that could be expanded into a side business, a career act?* Having a profitable hobby, interest, or passion can be one of the most enjoyable ways to make a living, especially if you can turn it into a thriving small business. *Who wouldn't want to generate substantial income doing what they love?* The world is full of people who have done just that—they've taken their hobbies, originally enjoyed solely for personal pleasure, and turned them into income-generating career acts. Hobbies with tangible outcomes, such as art, sewing, baking, cooking, photography, playing a musical instrument, and the like, can easily move to income-generating career acts. Let's consider the following fabulous examples:

**Monica's career acts**—Monica was unfulfilled in her career as a corporate organizational development specialist for about 6 years when she was (unfortunately?) laid off. She instinctively knew that she did not want to go back to a full-time corporate job, only to be unfulfilled in her career again. After a trip to Nepal where she hiked Mount Everest and contemplated life, she decided to follow her passion into something gardening-related. Monica had been doing garden coaching

for friends for about 7 years—mostly for free or in exchange for a good bottle of wine and a dinner—and had taken a lot of courses toward that career act. In fact, she is currently finishing a certificate program at the New York Botanical Garden in Environmental Gardening. She loves teaching others about gardening and started a garden coaching practice, created a Web site on local gardening resources (including newsletter and blog), and is currently developing an online store selling semicustom garden plans to novice gardeners and new homeowners. Monica started by building a Web site on local gardening resources ([www.thegardenerslist.com](http://www.thegardenerslist.com)) then going around to all the local nurseries to tell them about it. She started a gardening newsletter distributed to local nurseries as well as through e-mail to a growing list of subscribers. She plans to offer advertising in it next year. (Advertising will be a great source of passive income.) She uncovered an interest in Web site development and search engine optimization and started a consulting practice on these interests. Monica also does about 3 days each week of management consulting, allowing her great flexibility to run her own businesses.

**Tom C.'s career acts**—Tom works full-time for a large organization in the information technology (IT) field. As a client development manager, he is considered highly valuable by his organization because he is in a wealth-creating role for his firm. Tom has worked in similar roles for a variety of IT companies over his 30-year career and in the process has earned much professional freedom over time. While employment in the IT industry is still a fulfilling full-time career act, about 15 years ago Tom began buying rental properties and currently has 7 homes, fully rented. He is mechanically inclined and handy, enjoying the occasional maintenance and odd jobs the rental properties require.

## GET A LIFE, NOT A JOB

Tom also has an interest in green energy technology and has, over the past 10 years, developed a line of electric bicycles. Knowledge of electric motors and building electric bicycles was a self-taught hobby, one he enjoyed tinkering with all of his adult life. Inventing and marketing electric bicycles is Tom's primary passion and, currently is a third career act, which he hopes will become more central over time.

**Terry's career acts**—By occupation, Terry is a nurse. She has been a nurse for almost 30 years and (on many days) still enjoys what she does. She recalls sharing that she wanted to be a nurse for as long as she can remember and cannot imagine doing anything else. As a hobby, Terry also loves to design and sew—she says her prize possession is her much-loved sewing machine. Terry's passion for sewing is personal. She has rarely accepted money for the beautiful things she creates for her family and friends. But in the past few years, the circle of Terry's "friends" has expanded beyond its real limits. As much as she enjoys sewing, she decided that she needed to start charging for her time and creative effort. Although reluctantly charging at first, Terry found that acquaintances were more than happy to pay for her creations, and now her second career act thrives.

Clearly Monica, Tom, and Terry have multiple career acts and multiple sources of income. Do you, as Monica, Tom, and Terry, have a hobby, passion, interest, or talent you would like to turn into an income-generating career act? Try Exercise 3.



## Exercise 3: Career Acts Based on Interests, Hobbies, Passions, and Talents

**Name your hobbies:** \_\_\_\_\_

- How could I be paid while doing this hobby?
- Realistically, what steps would it take to do this ideal job?
- What are the paths to reach the goal of that ideal job?

**Name your interests:** \_\_\_\_\_

- How could I be paid while enjoying this interest?
- Realistically, what steps would it take to do this ideal job?
- What are the paths to reach the goal of that ideal job?

**Name your passions:** \_\_\_\_\_

- How could I be paid while pursuing this passion?
- Realistically, what steps would it take to do this ideal job?
- What are the paths to reach the goal of that ideal job?

**Name your talents:** \_\_\_\_\_

- What are you good at—what do others say you are good at?
  - How could I be paid and leverage my talents?
  - Realistically, what would it take to do this ideal job?
  - What are the paths to reach the goal of that ideal job?
-

Monica, Tom, and Terry have stories that make profitable hobbies sound easy. For most people, profitable hobbies really are an enjoyable way to make money. But, before you dive in, consider the following three (often overlooked) issues:

- 1. Understand the psychological shift**—You are now working for clients, not engaging in a hobby for yourself. You might lose freedoms enjoyed as a hobbyist when you begin to have customers or clients. I have a friend who bakes wonderfully and periodically talks about baking full-time. When pressed on why she doesn't, she says that baking is her “release,” her way to unwind at the end of the day and she does not want to lose her “release” by placing client demands on her baked goods. This is insightful and highly relevant for those who view their hobby as a personal outlet and would not want to fill orders to customer specifications. Alternatively, you can take a different approach and create what you like, hoping you'll find clients or customers who will appreciate and purchase what you want to sell. In this case, the trade-off is the preservation of personal freedom enjoyed as a hobbyist for a potential limitation on your range of clients or customers. Your call—just think it through.
- 2. Know how to value your time along with the tangible costs to price your goods or services**—Even if you only want to engage in your profitable hobby for a few hours each week, value your time as if you were doing this full-time. Try this: Ask yourself: *What income would I (realistically) want to be making if this was my sole source of income?*<sup>9</sup> Divide this out to an hourly wage and multiply by the hours you spend on one unit of your profitable hobby. Add in overhead. Add in material costs. Add in taxes. Decide what profit you would like to make (taking into account your level of skill, experience, etc.). Too many

people undervalue their time and their other intangible assets (such as their skill level).

- 3. Know your competition**—Hobbyists can operate in a delightful bubble; they can be blissfully unaware of the cost, quality, or marketability of whatever they produce. *If I want to make melted-bottle spoon rests for myself, family, and friends, do I really care about competition?* No. When you begin to market your hobby as a source for potential income generation, be sure you understand the competition and the potential market, the demand for your goods and services.

Monica's, Tom's, and Terry's hobbies are tangible and seemed to easily move to income-generating career acts. *What about less-tangible hobbies, interests, or passions, such as a general interest in travel, food, sports, or Groucho Marx memorabilia?* One of my favorite examples of a less-than-tangible interest turned into a career act is Jennifer, a Web designer who happens to love coffee. One of her favorite coffeehouses was a privately owned café where the proprietor roasted his own coffee beans. After becoming acquainted with the proprietor as a regular customer, Jennifer set up a Web-based business to market the very coffee she enjoys.

Honestly, I have a hard time with the question "*What are your talents, passions, interests, and hobbies?*" My most sincere answer is that I don't have any hobbies. My passion, if you will, is spending time with family and friends in interesting or beautiful places. Whether I am with my family at our lake house in upstate New York or with friends in Tuscany, I am most engaged when I am with wonderful people in great places, doing interesting things. This doesn't translate easily into a career act—at least I haven't yet found someone who will pay me for this. Thankfully, there are other approaches to adding career acts.

## Approach 3: Pursue an Occupation

Occupations are a series of related jobs within job families that share a set of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Doctors, plumbers, actors, and teachers are examples of occupational groups. Within a given occupation, skills are generally transferable across a variety of work situations. For example, a physical therapist might have a private practice and might also work part-time for a minor-league baseball team or might work one day a week at a rehabilitation center. A teacher might offer English as a Second Language classes to new immigrants or tutor. If you are interested in exploring possible occupations, consider engaging in the following activities:

- Visit industry Web sites to learn more about selected occupations.
- To explore occupations that might be a good fit for you, you could also take some assessment tools to determine your interests. One very popular test is the Strong Interest Inventory. You can visit [www.careers-by-design.com/strong\\_interest\\_inventory.asp](http://www.careers-by-design.com/strong_interest_inventory.asp) to take the Strong Interest Inventory. Another one is ACT's Discover program found at [www.act.org/discover](http://www.act.org/discover).
- Speak to individuals who are currently in occupations or jobs you believe you would want. People, for the most part, enjoy talking about what they do for a living, especially if they are passionate about their jobs.
- Join professional online forums designed for people interested in certain professions, industries, and so on.
- Another great source of information about occupations is O\*Net, where you can look up almost any occupation and find out a world of information, including tasks performed; required areas of knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the job; and the context of the work. O\*Net's Web site is <http://online.onetcenter.org/>.

## Approach 4: Generate Sources of Passive Income

At the risk of sounding lazy, this is my personal favorite. A very wealthy and successful friend once said to me when I was thinking about a career in consulting, “*Paula, people never get wealthy exchanging time for money.*” His advice was, and remains, excellent. Our time is a 24-7 limited resource. The amount of time you want to use each day on income-generating activities is one more value to consider when crafting your ideal career acts. Think about the life you want to live and answer the question seriously: *How much time do you want to spend engaging in career acts?* If you are like many, you might be laughing at the question and answering “as little as possible.” If so, I’d recommend you consider ways to develop a career act or acts to provide sources of passive income (money that is paid to you for a product or service that does not require your active involvement or time).

Monica’s newsletter where she is able to sell advertising and Tom’s rental properties are examples of passive income. We discuss ways to create passive income in the last chapter of this book.

Great career acts are as diverse as the people who occupy them. These four approaches produce wildly different careers in people with multiple career acts. They are often combined and reconfigured throughout our careers to achieve ever-increasing career satisfaction. More than anything, you want your career to have a trajectory of positive growth in satisfaction and fulfillment. Please give yourself time to explore the many possibilities available to you. Once identified, you can use Exercise 4 to help you make the plan for growing your career acts.

---

## Exercise 4: Planning and Growing Your Career Acts

### Your Ideal Career Act #1 \_\_\_\_\_

- Possible starting career act:
- Knowledge, skills, and abilities I need for this starting career act:
- Different ways I will gain them:
- The next step after this starting career act to move me closer to my ideal career act:
- Possible derailers and ways to proactively address them:
- My timeline:

### Your Ideal Career Act #2 \_\_\_\_\_

- Possible starting career act:
- Knowledge, skills, and abilities I need for this starting career act:
- Different ways I will gain them:
- The next step after this starting career act to move me closer to my ideal career act:
- Possible derailers and ways to proactively address them:
- My timeline:

### Your Ideal Career Act #3 \_\_\_\_\_

- Possible starting career act:
  - Knowledge, skills, and abilities I need for this starting career act:
  - Different ways I will gain them:
  - The next step after this starting career act to move me closer to my ideal career act:
  - Possible derailers and ways to proactively address them:
  - My timeline:
-

## The Necessary Elements for Multiple Fulfilling Career Acts

Your fulfilling career acts will be personally, professionally, and financially rewarding and based on what you love to do. Although no two people have identical career acts, great careers share five fundamental elements:

- **Self-awareness**—Your interest in occupying various professional roles and the centrality they are given will change over time. Know yourself well and identify your talents, interests, hobbies, passions, needs, motivators, and how you like to work. Give yourself permission to expand or change your career acts if you are not fulfilled or as your life changes. The goal, if you will, is the growth and movement toward ever-increasing career happiness.
- **Continuous self-development**—No one is born with the knowledge, skills, and abilities for every possible interesting career act. Be honest in assessing your knowledge, skills, and abilities and be open to actively learn and develop. You might need to practice an act (in an unpaid internship or volunteer situation) to gain the necessary skills. You might need to accept a starter career act to gain skills. Remember, this is a dynamic process to move you closer to a career that is well integrated into the life you want to live.
- **Unique and critical roles (especially critical for those in single-act careers)**—It might be the case that your ideal career has only one act: one great career act where you will derive 100% of your career satisfaction—either as an entrepreneur or while working for an organization. This is the riskiest approach to managing your career for all the reasons mentioned earlier, but certainly not impossible. If you want a one-act career, please be amazing, make it a career you love, and have a safety net. This safety net is your uniqueness to

your business and your centrality to your employer, your customers, or your clients.

- **Well-managed time, money, and human resources—** Multiple-act careers grow strategically, with one career act funding the development of another, more interesting act. One career act might free up time for another. Make a career plan, revisit it frequently, and revise it when needed. Your career plan will have some logical steps with financial and professional goals as milestones. If you like to cook, you can think about developing your career acts in the same way you would prepare and cook a dinner. Each dish needs some different ingredients and needs attention at various times.
- **Harmony among your work, family, and personal life—** Multiple-act careers leverage interests, needs, and motivators. When done well, your career acts are purposeful and you are in control. As the person in control of your life, you are in charge of where your time and energy will go. Your career is only one piece of your overall life, and no one other than you (especially not an employer) should be crafting how you want to live your life.

The next five chapters delve deeper into each of these elements, offering some practical advice on how best to create and manage your multiple career acts.



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