A Guide
to
Owning Your Career

I'm the Boss of Me

Jeanne Beliveau-Dunn
with **Marilyn R. Freedman**

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To the many parents, educators, counselors, and psychologists who have dedicated their lives to helping family and others achieve, succeed, and find their way through life's choices and challenges.

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Acknowledgments

There is no higher purpose than helping your family and others you care about achieve, succeed, and find their way through life's choices and challenges. I learned this truth first from my mother, who—through troubled times and easier times—always made me feel loved, valued, and important. She set the stage for my success by showing me how to get back up when life knocks you down and by demonstrating resilience throughout my childhood.

I've lived this truth with my husband, who has been the source of great strength for me throughout the past 30 years. His unquestionable love and acceptance of me for everything I am and am not has given me the confidence to put my own truth out there for others to read. He has been my advisor, my partner in exploring the richness of life, and my best friend.

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About the Author

Jeanne Beliveau-Dunn is a recognized thought leader on the workforce of the future and an expert in education, the social enterprise, and knowledge systems. As an expert in the workforce of the future, she consults and presents to business and government leaders across the globe. She was recognized as one of "The 2015 Top 50 Most Powerful Women in Technology" by the National Diversity Council, which features the most influential female executive leadership across America's leading corporations.

During her more than 20-year career with Cisco, Jeanne brought the first social education system in the industry (The Cisco Leaning Network) to market in 2008. In 2015, while finishing this book, she founded The Internet of Things Talent Consortium to empower and accelerate a more agile workforce in the digital economy.

At Cisco, Jeanne's work is best described as helping customers and partners be successful, creating capabilities and innovative new services and solutions, moving through disruptive changes in technology, identifying new market opportunities, and helping others to disrupt business models and create growth opportunities. In other words, she's on a crusade to move the entire technology industry forward.

But she doesn't want to stop with the industry. Jeanne has a passion for mentoring people. This book is her way of doing that at scale. Her philosophy of self-empowerment and love fuels her professional and personal calling to help people develop themselves and their careers, work together, collaborate, innovate, and be better together.

Jeanne Beliveau-Dunn is Vice President and GM at Cisco Systems, where she leads several businesses including education. She is president and chairman of the Internet of Things Talent Consortium. She also serves on a number of advisory boards for organizations committed to continuous learning and talent. She lives in Northern California with her husband, Larry, and their four-legged furry child, Hunter.

Preface

Since 2008, I have been coaching, advising, and speaking to thousands of people on the topic of "reinventing yourself." At one of these events, I asked the audience, "How many of you are working in something you are truly passionate about and are happy in your career?" Less than 20 percent of the people in the room raised their hands, and they did so tentatively. After confirming this at other events and with a number of professional coaches, I realized I wanted to do something to help, and I began to outline and write this book.

This book is inspired by my belief that your career and your life are yours to own. Why let life and work manage you? You can be "the boss of you" by making empowering decisions for yourself that have you working on things you love and that keep you motivated. Being "the boss of you" means taking a self-directed approach to managing your life and career and being planful, thoughtful, and inspired to achieve your true potential.

I begin in Chapter 1 by outlining my philosophy of life and success. Everyone has experiences in life that challenge them—I call these events *contrast*. If you ground yourself in an operating model of love and build mental discipline and emotional intelligence, you will be able to use these challenges to learn and grow. In Chapter 2, I discuss basic skills that you need to develop to support the self-empowered approach I advocate: self-awareness, avoiding artificial limits, courage, resilience, persistence, discipline, and focus. In Chapter 3, I turn to using an explorer mentality to discover the work you like best, a process that you might engage in several times over the course of your life. In Chapter 4, I teach you how to use the planning tool called Vision-Strategy-Execution-Metric. In Chapter 5, I describe the benefits of developing a learner's mindset and how to use it to align your behavior with your vision. The central focus of Chapter 6 is communicating with others about your VSE, including building a personal brand

statement, matching your vision to opportunities, and building a bench of supporters. In Chapter 7, I discuss how to build and maintain an attitude that supports your career vision and how to use inside-out, outside-in thinking to create your dream job. In Chapter 8, I discuss internal roadblocks and barriers that you create and how to let them go so you don't hold yourself back. In Chapter 9, I return to planning and look at how you can use thoughtful planning to integrate important elements of work and life in a way that's effective for you. And in the last chapter, I return to key aspects of all the skills and explore how to manage major workplace challenges such as discrimination and working with other people who aren't like you.

I wish you well on your journey!

~ Jeanne

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You Are Who You Are Because of Your Choices

Accept responsibility for your life. Know that it is you who will get you where you want to go, no one else.

Les Brown

I am very thankful for the success I have achieved in my career and life. I get to work with amazing people and do things that I never thought possible. Looking at my life and career, one might think that I grew up with all of the privileges and all the best advisors. The assumption is that I am someone from a nice town with good schools, my family had money and connections, and I thrived in the life I was supposed to live. None of that is the case.

A Challenged Beginning

I grew up a daughter of immigrant families who had tough lives, and I had personal and family challenges. We lived in Lawrence, Massachusetts, a town of immigrants from all parts of the world, trying to find a better life living in a city with a depressed economy and a high crime rate.

That being said, I would not trade anything in my past for something better because it made me the person I am today, and that is someone who I am quite comfortable with.

One recent day in Boston, I was shopping down Newbury Street and ran into a younger version of myself at Max Mara, my favorite clothing store. In the store, a woman in her early twenties greeted me and started to lead me to a number of irresistible pieces that were just my style. She engaged me as a person and told me her story about coming to Boston for school and earning her way through college. She is from Colombia and had a very warm, engaging style that immediately sucked me in. Meeting her made me remember my past and reflect on my present. I feel for her to have to work full time while going through school, but I know from experience that this will work in spades for her in the end.

My story is similar to hers. My parents were not college educated but both of them were very smart, and although they had their problems, we all loved each other. When times were good, they were really good. When times were bad, they were really bad. We lived a life of extremes—a life of *contrast*.

My father was a striking man—tall and good-looking with intense eyes. He spent much of his early adult life serving in the Air Force during wartime. His battlefield experiences created many demons for him, which came out through alcoholism.

He was self-educated and a tinkerer. All of our electronics at home were constantly in a state of disarray because he liked to pull apart and reassemble our TVs, stereos, and even our car. Nothing in our house worked. He was fascinated with technology and had many different jobs—none that he held too long because he would get bored or clearly was not living the dream in the workplace. When he finally had a great job as a member of the technical support staff for the first Apollo mission to the moon (he was essentially a technical writer), he felt disenfranchised by the lack of control over his work and once again drank himself into unemployment.

I loved my father. He was witty, clever, a real adventurer, and full of life when he was doing what he loved. Unfortunately, and like many people I have met, he spent most of his life doing things he did not like.

My mom played the role of parent and disciplinarian to my father and me, and we would challenge her quite a bit. She did not stand a chance with the two of us kids until something happened: He died. My father was my best friend, my co-adventurer in the back woods of Canada and Maine, and I lost him when I was 12 years old—just when I was starting to understand who I was.

Looking back, I think it was my voracious appetite for learning through experience and how I enjoyed discovering the unknown or finding a new, untouched path—qualities I got from my dad—that helped me get through this very difficult time.

Building Resilience and Strength

After my dad died, taking on adult responsibilities was not a choice; it was survival. Our family had both financial and emotional problems. A deep love between my mother and father and my mother's discipline, strength, persistence, and level head in a crisis had kept the family together through our troubles. But when my father died at 38, my brother, mother, and I were left to pull ourselves back from a slide into poverty. After my father died, my mother developed several health problems that challenged keeping the family together. My brother and I had to live with other family members and friends while my mother recovered.

During this time, my priority—I was the oldest—was to get my family through this crisis and out of survival mode as soon as possible. I knew there was more to life than survival, but I also realized that dreaming without purpose and doing without a strategy would result in a goalless life without direction or purpose. Having lived through my father's choices and his less-than-purposeful life, I was not interested in making that same mistake. I went to work at age 12, learned how to support myself and take care of my family, and kept working all

the way through college. Although they were difficult and scary, these experiences accelerated my development. As a young child, I was very shy, being an only child for the first 10 years of my life. When my dad died, I realized being shy wasn't going to work for me. I loved fashion and clothes, and did not want to do without; I was determined to have a great life. So I did anything legal and creative to earn money and build my confidence. I even went to hairdressing school so I could earn money while going to college. I liked doing creative things and working with other people to help them feel good about themselves. This became a way for me to also feel good about myself—particularly at a time when I operated my life without a safety net.

Sometimes when life became overwhelming, I would have to talk myself into a path forward. I would tell myself that things would work out for us as a family if we simply stayed positive and had each other. I used to watch a lot of old movies, the kind with happy endings, which gave me an escape from the tough times. Even though I did not know what lay in front of me, I had deep faith that somehow this would all work out. My mom, friends' moms, aunts, and teachers would tell me that many great people came from nothing and from great adversity, and that where I came from did not have to define me. Of course, there were others who would tell me the opposite, but I did what I could to block them out.

If I wanted to have anything—a good home, better opportunities, and a better life—I knew I had to get to work and earn money. So, at 12 I got a job at a local retailer, even though I had to lie about my age (that caught up with me eventually). The funny thing is that I knew I was shy and fearful of speaking with people I did not know. But if there was a product to sell or common ground, like music or fashion, it made opening the conversation a bit easier.

The clothing store I worked at was a pleasant place to work. It helped me get things I needed, and it surrounded me with people who gave me great experiences and helped me get out of my shell. This first job gave me some early insight into fashion, and because I

also liked music—lots of musicians hung around there—it felt like a job with big benefits. The staff and management were nice and protective of me because of my situation. And they felt bad when social security came knocking at their door—I was underage, oops!—and they had to let me go.

The good news was I was on my journey to be less shy and more outgoing—a major boost to my future job potential. I had to fake being outgoing at first, but the more I talked to strangers the easier it got and the better I was in connecting with them. Because I was young, I was always trying to improve myself. I dreamed and imagined a lot about what I could be and what I wanted to be, and I paid attention to elements of what I liked in other people. I tried emulating their behavior in hopes that I would get more comfortable with myself; I thought mimicking their confidence would get me through my fear of rejection or lack of confidence. Those years were like a roller coaster. They had amazing highs and lows. I was proud of what I was doing for my age and how I was breaking through my fears, but also lived in the reality of the big climb ahead to get to college and into a great life.

Even though I felt I was on my own, I came to realize that I could turn to family, friends, and teachers for advice and help. These people would give me other perspectives and support. A friend's mom, Deloris Waterman, used to pump me up with her view of my potential and by describing what life could hold for me every time I went over to their house. I went over there as often as I could. She was an educated woman and the wife of a lawyer from a prominent family. Although they had fallen on hard times, she had been places and had known famous people, and she had great faith in me. Her faith in me helped build my confidence. My mother was also a great source of inspiration as she began to pull herself out of her health problems and make better choices that helped get us back on our feet. She loved both my brother and me deeply and would always make us feel valued and important. That is a gift that I choose to repay and pay

forward with others whenever I can because I know how powerful it was for me to receive it.

Empower Yourself

These early hardships taught me to embrace the power of me, because in my heart I knew that I had to take charge of my future. It is through these experiences that I developed my philosophy about work and life. I developed a strong determination to have a big and joyful life and not accept less than what I wanted from the future. It was clear to me then, as it is now, that there is more to life than what my parents experienced. I wanted everything, a great life and a rewarding, worthwhile career, and I knew that working to get what I wanted did not have to mean sacrificing who I was. Ultimately, these experiences gave me the knowledge, skills, and practice I needed to develop a very successful career.

We all know people whose early lives were difficult but whose choices on how to deal with it were what set them up for their lives ahead. We have all heard the stories of many famous and successful people who came from nothing and were able to build great lives for themselves. A privileged background is not necessarily an advantage or a criterion for achieving success. Think about Bill Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, David Geffen, Barack Obama, Patti Smith, Sally Jessy Raphael, Jim Carrey, and Jeannette Walls, among many others. All of these people have two things in common: they are at the top of their game in their professions today, and they had periods in their lives characterized by economic or personal tragedy.

Success isn't the result of random good luck or confidence fairies. In my case, no privileged background or parents' connections helped me along the way. Although hard work is involved with success, there is more to it than that. Even though most folks are knowledgeable about their area of expertise and have a few ideas about what drives personal success, they still struggle to get the outcome they want out of their careers. What I discovered from my experiences and from

observing others is that the ability to succeed has a formula. There are some general principles involved in achieving success, and you can apply these principles to your life and your career.

How Successful People Create Their Success

In my current job(s) leading Cisco's education business and technical services strategy along with being the founder and CEO of the Internet of Things (IoT) Talent Consortium, I work with all types of people from all walks of life in business, government, and technology. I have had the opportunity to meet and work with some of the most interesting, successful business leaders in the world, many of whom inspired me throughout my career and even inspired me to write this book. We will discuss not just their points of view on success, but also what they look for when hiring people and who they give opportunities to when they have great jobs to offer. I am hoping that this unique vantage point can help you think about your journey and how to create your own success.

Successful individuals share some behaviors. They have a purpose. They put people first but also stay true to who they are and to their own goals and dreams. They are constantly developing their self-awareness and an awareness of their environment. In fact, they are very curious—about themselves, other people, and how things work—and understand the power of relationships, shared wisdom, and experience. And they never give up, even after a failure. Being a learner and being resilient are key.

They are very disciplined in managing their lives and managing accomplishments. They embrace simplicity. And they act with empathy, kindness, regard for others, and compassion for themselves and others. They acknowledge that what is human has precedence over objects and material things.

I have found that the most powerful teachers of these skills, attitudes, and behaviors are the challenges that you encounter throughout your life. Unlike the popular belief that life happens to you and you have no control over it, I believe, as do many other successful people, that what you do, how you feel, how you think, and how you react to life are always a matter of choice. You decide who you want to be and how to operate your life. You make decisions on how to deal with others and with the challenges in the world, and only you can create your life experience. More than 1,500 years ago, Marcus Aurelius wrote: "Our actions may be impeded by them, but there can be no impeding our intentions or our dispositions. Because we can accommodate and adapt. The mind adapts and converts to its own purposes the obstacle to our acting. The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way."[1] Smart guy.

Contrast Shows You What You Want

Life challenges create *contrast*, the difference between where you are and where you would like to be. Contrast can produce exactly the opportunities you need in order to learn and develop the skills that will help you achieve success. Don't be afraid of failure or moments of adversity. You can make these work for you.

Contrast is the key to becoming clear about what you want out of life. It creates a defining moment. It has been my greatest teacher, and you will hear from many great leaders that they learn more from their failure than from their success. Experience what you don't want, and you become clear about what you do want and what you are willing to do to get it. And when you are clear about what you want, you can develop a vision, goals, and a plan that will take you there. People who are successful have succeeded because they have learned everything they can from the contrast that occurs in their lives. There is no greater motivator for success than seeing what it is like to not be successful! Take it from me, contrast can really light you up and create great ambition and momentum.

Part of using contrast and experiences to your advantage is treating them as a gift. Those years of early challenges and working through them successfully built within me a great sense of self and a good amount of confidence. I have become very comfortable with my strengths and shortcomings; I make no apologies for not trying to be something I am not. I have used what I like and what I don't like to develop a strong internal compass that guides my career and my life, which has been multi-faceted and incredibly rewarding. My compass has enabled me to take risks and chances with every opportunity and to make decisions with clarity and focus. I was and am determined to have a great life—more than what my parents had—and I have not allowed my early bad experiences to recur in my own family or career. Seeing my father turn to alcohol instead of choosing a better career and working hard for what he wanted was a great contrasting experience for me because I got to see and live through the result, which was not very good. Seeing family members who got educated and had important jobs and great family lives, along with reading about other people who were successful, became great inspirations for me to see the connection between strategies, life decisions, and results.

Contrast Doesn't Need to Be Big to Work for You

Many people who achieved success or reached their goals in life did so by getting clarity of vision through contrast or adversity. Their experiences when they got less than what they wanted, or perhaps deserved, helped them launch their dreams. And they made an empowered response to contrast.

We have all felt contrast from time to time, even if it was not a big life event. If, for example, you wanted to play soccer as a kid but you got knocked down and others would make fun of your inexperience, you might react in a few different ways. 1. Get the names and numbers of the kids who made fun of you and put a contract out on them the first chance you had (not a wise choice). 2. Study what the good players did that made them better and get inspired about what you

could do to improve. Perhaps get advice on improvements and double the practice time on these areas (a much better choice). Or 3. Come to the conclusion that the experienced players were just better than you and there was nothing you could do about it (not a great choice if you want to succeed).

A very powerful example of success on a grand scale is the iconic CEO of Cisco systems, John Chambers. I have had the privilege of working with him for most of my career, and he will go down in the books as one of the best CEOs of all times. Although he had a great start in life, being the son of two educated and well-to-do professionals, John struggled with dyslexia, which challenged him all through school. If he did not power through this challenge and use it to motivate his performance, we would not have seen John's great success as CEO of Cisco Systems. To achieve these kinds of results, you have to let every experience that comes at you—good and bad—inspire you and teach you. And you must use every learning experience as an opportunity to grow and become your best vision of you.

Many famous people in business, science, entertainment, and sports come from backgrounds of contrast. They did not have the resources or the advantages of others, and yet they live bigger than life. At some point, each of these people felt like they weren't where they wanted to be, whether that was about wealth, love, power, fame, creativity, intelligence, and so on.

People who become successful respond to contrast by looking at it as a life lesson. When you have a moment of failure or a bad experience, the emotional side of you asks, "What happened? How did I get to this place I don't want to be?" This response to contrast helps you examine your choices, both past and future, and it is part of how contrast gives you the experience to know what you want. Contrast experiences also propel you to think about solutions to achieve what you want. Rather than feeling victimized by failure or adversity (that internal voice saying someone did this to me or why do bad things happen to me), the person headed for success feels empowered and

has a burning desire to improve the situation and move through the element of contrast quickly so that they can be happy, improve their lives, and reach their goals. They spend just enough time as needed to reflect on what happened and as much time as possible moving quickly to solutions and getting where they want to be. Note to self and others: don't focus on the problem, focus on the solution!

Push toward Change or Shrink from It, It's Your Choice

When they feel contrast, many people push themselves to change it. You can respond to contrast by shrinking from it or by trying to leverage the lesson and gain clarity on what you need to do now. You can be empowered to resolve contrast, or you can be disempowered and run from it. Do you meet contrast with fear and loathing, or do you greet it with a sense that you can create a good path or new outcome that will make a difference in your life? Shaq O'Neal, one of the best basketball players of all times, once said that his teachers told him that he would never amount to anything. Instead of believing them, he chose to prove them wrong, and he used this negative influence to drive and motivate himself to be the best at his craft.

Although some people use early life challenges to launch themselves on a path to success, others with similarly difficult early experiences make different choices and end up with different outcomes. This is important: their choices—what they decided to think and do—led to different outcomes: a new beginning or something else.

Think about Michael Oher, who grew up in the ghetto of Memphis, Tennessee. Michael Oher's story is so extraordinary and inspirational that it was made into a feature movie, *The Blind Side*, based on the bestseller of the same name by Michael Lewis. Oher himself has written an autobiography, *I Beat the Odds*, to tell his story from his own point of view. You may think Michael Oher got where he is today because he was lucky. He was definitely in the right place at the right time to get into a good private school. But Oher was in the

right place at the right time because he understood what he wanted out of life and because of his own hard work. In spite of his disadvantaged background, he accepted help when it was offered, took the opportunities that came his way, and worked hard toward the goals he set for himself. In his autobiography Oher says, "Even though it wasn't the easier way, I decided that I wanted to be one of the kids who was actually working toward the goal, prepping myself for the kind of life I wanted. … In the end, I realized any success I might have would come down to two things: 1) finding good people to surround myself with; and 2) taking responsibility for myself."[2]

Our choices make a difference. They drive our outcomes in one direction or another. You make different choices in response to contrast—choices about how to use your energy and how to pursue your desires—and these choices will influence your next experiences and outcomes.

In the end, if you wish it to, contrast helps you create clarity about what you want and inspires you to take the action you need to get what you want. How you respond to contrast and your attitude toward the events in your life make all the difference. In his play *No Exit*, Jean Paul Sartre said, "A man is what he wills himself to be."[3] Although some of what happens to us in life might be random, our responses don't have to be.

Choose Love When Fear Calls

What we do—including what we think—is influenced by our attitudes and outlook about ourselves and life. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl said, "Between a stimulus and a response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. The last of human freedoms is to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances."[4]

Although at age 12 I had not heard of Viktor Frankl, in the months after my father died I learned the lesson he describes. I could choose how I felt about my life at any time. But then the grief from his loss and my fears for my family would wash over me, and it would get me down.

I learned another important lesson at that time. Sitting with Deloris Waterman and my mother and listening to them talk about my potential and about what life could hold for me, I felt loved and cherished. I felt the same while I was working because I was good at what I did and I was successful. This success helped to balance out the other negative things going on around me when I was being bullied or looked down on at school because of my background.

And so you have love on the one hand, and fear on the other. If you ground yourself in love, you see the world in one way. If you let fear guide you, you see the world another way.

Frankl went on to say later, "… I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth—that Love is the ultimate and highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love." What he is talking about is your ability to look at any situation from a sense of love and appreciation, or at least from empathy rather than fear or loathing.

Two Operating Models: Love and Fear

I believe there are really only two operating models for how you perceive the world, and let's be clear about this: How you see the world determines both the way you feel about the world around you and the way you behave in response. Like Frankl, I think one of these operating models is love. The other is fear. (See Figure 1-1.) Choosing your operating model—yes, I said *choosing* your operating model—will ground you either in positive and good feelings or negative and distrustful feelings as you experience life.

Jealousy
Fragmentation
Limitation
Distrust
Anger
Fear
Disablement
Destructiveness Hopelessness
Withdrawal
Shame Discomfort
Cynicism

Ambition
Connectedness
Inspiration
Love
Passion
Creativity
Joy Trust
Freedom
Ease
Comfort
Pride Humor
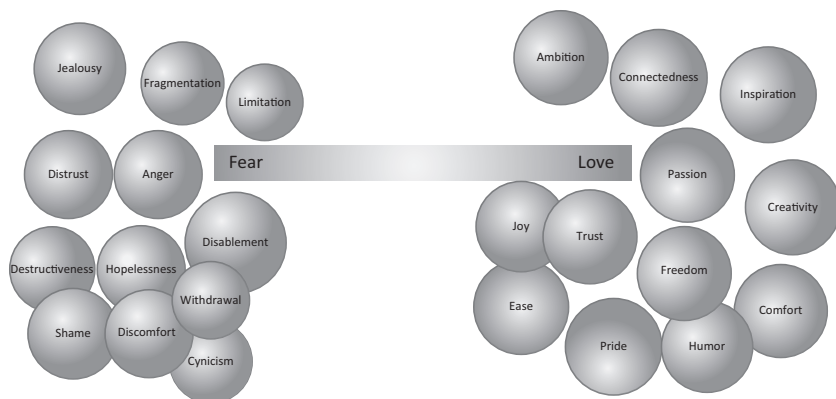
Figure 1-1 The Love-Versus-Fear Continuum

If you choose love as your operating model, you will perceive the world as a good place and people as generally good by nature. You treat yourself and others well and expect to be treated well by others; you trust others unless they demonstrate untrustworthiness; and you work toward win-wins in your life and in business. You care more about getting things done and doing things the best way you can and less about being right. Likewise, you care less about your ego. You respect other people and their choices and don't take things personally or too seriously. You find joy in many things, have sad moments, and are resilient when things get tough. And when things get tough enough to knock you down, you don't stay down long.

If your operating model is fear, then you will either be scared to try new things, which will hold you back, or you will feel angry you are not getting what you want while others are. You look at the lack of things rather than appreciate what you have. You are suspicious of others, think the world is unfair, and believe that you can do nothing to change your circumstances.

It's easy to feel fear. The most primitive part of our brain is hardwired to react to the unknown with fear because in the past this trait helped us survive as a species. We haven't lost that survival instinct. It is natural for people to fear anything that is unfamiliar, but it does not need to rule your behavior.

Fear is not an operating model you want to choose. Of course, you sometimes must operate from fear for short intervals, when you must do something risky or when something makes you uncomfortable, but you never want to live there. Operating from a position of fear can create a death spiral if you stay there for long periods of time. It is hard to be positive or hopeful when you are in fear because your ability to think realistically shuts down and you imagine all the worst things that could happen. A prolonged negative point of view can freeze you in place and immobilize you.[5]

Most of us try to live in the operating model of love. We are born with the ability to get enjoyment from socializing with others and from new experiences. We also are born with the capacity to give and receive, to laugh and find joy and beauty everywhere it exists.

Stay Out of the Bubble, Stay Off Autopilot

Although many people want to operate from a position of love and respect, they sometimes find themselves blinded by their own perspective or self-focused thoughts. We tend to get distracted by our thoughts and immediate needs and to hyper-focus on our own point of view. This self-centered focus can put our thoughts and emotions in a bubble. When you operate from your own bubble, you are not perceiving the world around you; your mind is working in overdrive and creating doubts and fear, or even giving you the wrong information. In the end, this cripples your ability to be successful.

Living in a bubble of fear or negativity happens to everyone from time to time. But fear does not have to be your operating model. The important thing is to choose your operating model and stay within it as much as you can.

Most of the time, we live on autopilot. When we engage in everyday life, we rely on habits and we react to things without considering every decision. If I didn't have my morning routine, I would be lost. At the same time, when it comes to big decisions and important events, I stop and think, plan carefully, and choose to be proactive rather than

reactive. For the important things in my life, I make sure I have the space between stimulus and response that Frankl talks about.

But underlying it all, I have an operating model that underpins my habits and routines. That operating model is love.

It's important to understand that we can choose our operating model. If we don't consciously choose an operating model, our unconscious processes will choose one for us, and it will probably be fear.

A Bucket List for Success

Five things account for about 75 percent of success: self-discipline, clarity, ambition, alignment, and attitude. For me these are choices in approach and behavior. I've learned them throughout my career, the same as I learned to develop my operating model and emotional intelligence. At every turn, they have led me to take control of myself and my circumstances. In other words, I am the boss of me!

What does it mean to be "the boss of me?" At work and in life, before you report to anyone else, you report to you. You are in charge. You decide where to take your life and career. You determine your path. To achieve success, you find mentors and collaborate with them. You create and manage your own destiny with an internal map and compass, skills, knowledge, and practice. These enable you to become capable of incredible accomplishment and leadership.

Your internal map and compass are made up of your operating model, self-knowledge, and self-discipline. Your values and the life lessons you have learned are your guide.

Think about the people you like to be around and spend time with. I bet that they are self-motivated, comfortable in their shoes, and enjoying life. You can get to the same place. By the time you finish reading this book, you will have an action plan that will help you engage in self-development and manage a career for a successful life.

Build the Self-Empowered Road to Success

What do you need in order to become your boss? One element includes gaining a better perspective of yourself. A key to gaining that perspective is emotional intelligence, which I talk about in Chapters 2 and 5.

In the realm of your career, you need a good perspective about what a company or organization wants from you. You'll need to develop the ability to blend your self-perspective with an organization's perspective in order to create a career plan that will lead to success within that organization. If you are the boss of the company called "you," then whoever you work with are your customers. And every successful company knows its customers well and what value it can bring to those customers.

To become your boss and be successful, you need to build the following qualities into your approach to life:

- Self-awareness (know your strengths and weaknesses)
- A will to avoid artificial limits
- An explorer-mentality about yourself, your passion, and how you fit into the world
- Curiosity to seek out the right people and information and the willingness to learn
- Resilience, persistence, and courage
- A positive attitude
- Thoughtful planning
- Discipline and focus
- Ambition to set goals and take action
- A willingness to evolve and innovate; to grow and lean into trends; or to create your own trends.

You can think of these as basic career survival skills and success behaviors, what it takes to be successful and happy in any job or any role. (See Figure 1-2.) But these skills take you beyond survival. What lies beyond career survival is your dream job or jobs (because many of us will have multiple dream jobs as we adapt and evolve through our lives). We each spend an enormous amount of time at work—about 90,000 hours over the course of an average work life.[6] So it makes sense to create a dream job or series of dream jobs and really live your life in a big way.
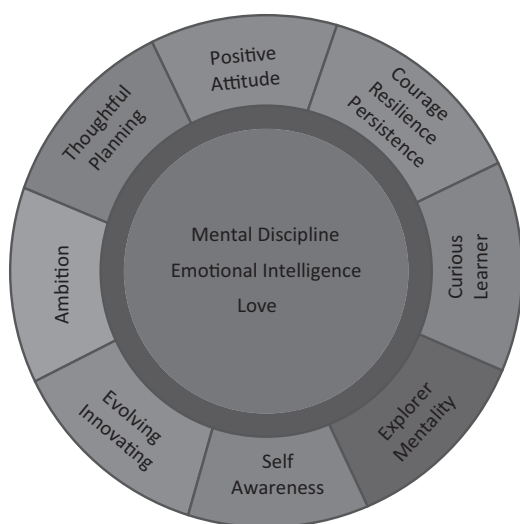
Figure 1-2 Basic Career Survival Skills

Many people characterize these skills as personality traits or as qualities that people are born with. They are not inherent qualities present in a person from birth. They are behaviors that you learn from experiences or from activities that you engage in by choice. And they are behaviors that you should use and practice after you have learned them and become skilled at over time. It makes no difference whether these skills come to you naturally or whether you proactively seek to learn them. What matters is that you continue to develop and practice

these skills by actively using them. Learn, master, and practice these skills throughout your life.

I discuss these skills throughout the different chapters in this book. I've already talked some about self-discipline. In Chapter 2, I focus on self-awareness; avoiding artificial limits; courage, resilience, and persistence; and discipline and focus. In Chapter 3, I talk about how to develop yourself and use an explorer mentality. In Chapter 4, I discuss the planning tool called Vision-Strategy-Execution. Chapter 5 addresses the learner's mindset, among other things. The central focus of Chapter 6 is how to use your VSE to develop a personal brand and network. In Chapter 7, I discuss building an attitude that supports you and how to use inside-out, outside-in thinking. In Chapter 8, I look at internal roadblocks and barriers and how to let them go. In Chapter 9, I return to planning and look at how you can use thoughtful planning to integrate important elements of work and life in a way that's effective for you. And in the last chapter, I return to key aspects of all the skills and explore how to manage major workplace challenges such as discrimination or working with other people who aren't like you.

Happiness First

Most people think that when they achieve success, they will be happy. They say to themselves, "When I have this job and the other things I want, I will be happy." But according to psychologist Shawn Achor, and most successful people, this is backwards. The reality is that happiness leads to success.[7] Happiness is a state of mind and an attitude that you create, not a collection of satisfied wants. You can create happiness almost any time you want—it's a state of mental and emotional well-being—because it comes from inside you.

I have traveled around the world, met people from almost every country, and found happy people at both upper and lower ends of the economic ladder. Your economic status doesn't create or prevent happiness. Some of the least happy people I have met are in reasonable shape financially, but they missed the boat on friendships, meaningful work, and a sense of purpose. They chased money but failed to develop the skills for happiness, missed out in family and purposeful work, and don't know how to get to the life they wish they had.

In the first *The World Happiness Report*, economists John Helliwell, Richard Layard, and Jeffrey Sachs reported on research about who is happiest, where they live, and what factors contribute to happiness. Their research shows that some of the happiest people are those connected with society, their village, their community, and their friends.[8] They are people who are enjoying their work, earning enough income to provide for basic needs, and working in jobs that match their talents. They are not necessarily rich, but have enough income to live safely, eat, and have the basics. They do not depend on money to be happy. The lesson here is that if you have enough income to cover the basics you need to survive, you can be happy. You do not need to have the best material possessions to be in the happiness zone.[9]

The least happy people I have met are those living in wealthy countries—the sorts of countries where you would think people would have much to be happy about. In contrast, I have observed great happiness in Thailand, India, and the poorest parts of the world. People living in these countries greet you with a smile and wishes of good health and joy, even when they don't know you. They have an inner joy that cannot be taken away, despite their relative poverty.[10]

What creates joy is joyful thoughts, not the things you have accumulated. You can create those joyful thoughts. What works for me is using my dreams and best memories and revisiting the finer moments in my life to keep my happiness quotient high. When things get rough, maintaining happiness can be difficult, but there are many strategies to make yourself happy, or at least to lift your

mood. For me, the best way to get an immediate energy boost is to do something for someone else: hug my dog or someone in my family. If I really need a big boost, I sit and write myself a gratefulness letter. This is a great exercise called "rampage of gratitude," where you sit and write or tell yourself what you are grateful for. Revisiting the great things you already have in your life is a great way to boost your mood and open the door for more good thoughts to occur. When I encourage or appreciate others, I create joy within myself. Thoughts and behaviors are like everything else. They build upon themselves, so when you get them going in the right direction, better things will come into your mind, and you can rebuild your spirit and emotional strength.

Getting Down to Work

Think about all the ways we have of describing successful people. We say that they excel in their chosen field, they are all stars, and they are accomplished. Writing in the best-selling book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell says that it takes approximately 10,000 hours of directed practice to become accomplished at something. I believe that directed practice requires that you put your skills to work every day in what you do as opposed to just simulating it. Talent isn't enough to get you there. You need to get success skills into muscle memory and hone the craft, which only comes through continuous trying and getting feedback. Learning comes from seeking advice or best techniques, grasping the basics, then applying them daily and seeing the results of your work. This continuous practice and feedback builds authentic skills and mastery. Getting feedback from coaches or mentors and from watching masters at the craft along the way are additional assets that help you master skills and techniques for success.

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