

Finding Your Gift: Three Paths to Maximizing Impact in Your Career

Do you have a job, or a career? Are you working for a paycheck, or are you working on your life's mission? Would you like to discover your inner potential, your deepest talents, world-class skills that will create abundance in your life?

Most of us spend anywhere from 40 to 80 hours a week on this thing we call our work, whether it be our job, career, enterprise, or a sense of mission. The time we spend working takes up a significant portion of our lives. If you're going to have an extraordinary life, you've got to have extraordinary work.

The commitment that you must make, more than creating an extraordinary career, is creating an extraordinary life, a life of *meaning* based on your terms. That doesn't mean, "It has to be my way." It means being in alignment with what *YOU* think matters most. If you're talking about your job, this means knowing what you'd love to do, the thing that will light you up in the morning and make you feel completely alive and fulfilled.

The secret to being really fulfilled is to know what your gift is. Not just your ability, not the skills you've learned, but to know what your gift is and to live that. Furthermore, fulfillment comes in having compassion and appreciation of others' gifts, creating a synergy that allows you to work effectively with them toward a common vision.

In essence, if you're going to succeed in your career, you need two skills:

- 1) Understanding yourself
- 2) The ability to work with other people by entering their world and connecting with them.

If you're going to be totally thrilled with your life, this part of the Pyramid of Mastery – career, or mission – is crucial. It has to be mastered and not dabbled in.

After working through the exercises in this worksheet, you'll create a foundation for all aspects of your life, including your career. You'll learn that by taking responsibility for those things that you can control, mainly your thoughts and actions, you can gradually extend your influence over things that seem to be out of your control. Finally, you will identify your primary gift so that you can use it in a way that not only brings you joy, but also success.

So many people are amazingly successful, but they're not necessarily enjoying it because they're not living their gifts. Happiness and fulfillment are yours to have every day for the rest of your extraordinary life. Get connected to the truth of your real nature. Your gift is waiting to be discovered.

I. Creating Your Life's Mission Statement

In the audio portion of “Find Your True Gift,” author Stephen Covey expresses the importance for every business, or enterprise, to have a Mission Statement; what that enterprise is going to be about.

The same holds true as you formulate a vision for your career. Work on your work by working on yourself first. Think of yourself as an enterprise, an entity that one day will go from private to public, from your vision of what you want to do to actually doing it.

Having a vision of what you want to create is essential to where that enterprise will go. However, there are four basic elements involved in creating an environment that functions effectively toward an enterprise's goals:

- 1) *Physical well-being* (including economics) – the principle of fairness; fairness to others and to yourself so that basic needs are met.
- 2) *Social* (relationships) – the principles of kindness, dignity, and respect for others; a culture where conflict can be resolved equitably.
- 3) *Psychological* – the principle of growth; identifying, developing and using talents.
- 4) *Spiritual* – the principle of contribution. Are you making a difference? Do you add value?

Our lives center on these basic themes. However, underneath lies a core set of principles, or basic truths, that are enduring and never change. An example of an enduring principle is the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Tying your identity and your role within all relationships to a set of principles, rather than to a set of responsibilities, gives you freedom and flexibility to recognize and adapt to situations for what they are, while still maintaining a sense of purpose toward your vision and knowing what *really matters most* within that vision.

Your True North Principles

Imagine a compass. No matter where you are or which direction you're moving in, true north never changes. Likewise, principles never change. On the other hand, values are internal and subject to change. What we value today may have no value next week because something in the environment changed. Think about it: when Beta home video recorders first hit the market, they were all the rage, but do they have any value now?

Our value system is manifested in our habit patterns. The key to changing a habit pattern that brings anything less than fulfillment is to get your value system, *the things that matter to you most* (the arrow of the compass), in alignment with your *principles*: true north. When your values and principles are in alignment, the vision of your life, and all areas within it, including work, becomes clearer.

Exercise

Create a core set of principles and a vision of your life's work into a Mission Statement. You're not only creating the soul of your career, but the center of your life.

I. First, what is it that you value most in life? Is it money, relationships, respect, recognition, fairness? Go into your heart and examine your motives. What are you really about? Write down all the things that are important to you.

II. Second, what are your core principles, basic truths that will apply to all areas of your life, a system that will inform the actions you take and how you respond to life's joys and challenges? Examples are listed below, but feel free to come up with your own!

- 1. Gratitude _____
- 2. Kindness _____
- 3. Compassion (forgiveness) _____
- 4. Charity _____
- 5. Productivity _____
- 6. Effectiveness _____
- 7. Courage _____
- 8. Justice (fairness) _____
- 9. Cheerfulness _____
- 10. Wisdom _____

III. Finally, create a Mission Statement for your life. Think of it this way: what would you want written on your gravestone? How would you want to be remembered? Use additional paper if necessary.

My life is going to be about _____

II. The Private Victory: Responsibility, Mission, and Action

In his best-selling book *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*, author Stephen Covey states that we are not merely stimulus response beings. We can choose the way to live, and that having a set of correlating principles and values creates the foundation of contribution and interdependence, components of healthy relationships of all types, including the relationships you will form toward achieving your ideal career.

To know what your gifts are, and to know how they can be used to contribute not only to a fulfilling life for yourself but for the sake of others, you first have to take ownership of the course of your life. Private victories always precede public victories.

Exercise

1) Pro-activity – Take responsibility for your life and career

We have a space between what happens to us and our response to what happens to us. We can choose our attitude and responses no matter what the circumstances. For example, if you've just been laid off from a job, you have the choice to take that as bad luck, or you can choose to take that as an opportunity to find your real life's mission.

Take a few moments to think about what kind of career would make you feel truly alive everyday. What would that career be? What would you be doing?

2) Mental/Spiritual Creation –What your career is going to be about

Go back to your Mission Statement and correlate that to the career that you envision for yourself. Begin with the end in mind.

This is the “Why” portion of your goals. Why do you want this career? What is your career going to be about? How will it add value to others? Are you willing to go the distance to get the career you want? What principle(s) enforce this determination?

3) Live by it – Put it into practice

Once you have a vision of your career, which is organized around your values and principles, execute actions around central priorities with discipline and commitment.

What one or two actions can you take immediately to get yourself away from a career that is not fulfilling and not centered around your principles, and into a career that not only utilizes your true gift but uses it in a way that matches your principles?

III. Circle of Influence

Imagine two circles: the smaller inside the larger. These are the Circles of Influence. The outer circle has to do with everyday concerns, things you may or may not have control over, and the inner circle is made up of the things *you do have some if not total control over* (changing your attitudes, thoughts, behaviors, or that of others). This inner circle is your Circle of Influence.

Exercise:

Think of all the things right now that aren't quite the way you want them to be and would like to somehow change. Separate these challenges into three categories:

1) Those things that you have *direct* control over, i.e. yourself; changing how you view a situation, changing how you respond to situations. For example, instead of responding to a perceived insult with anger, what other emotions could you respond with?

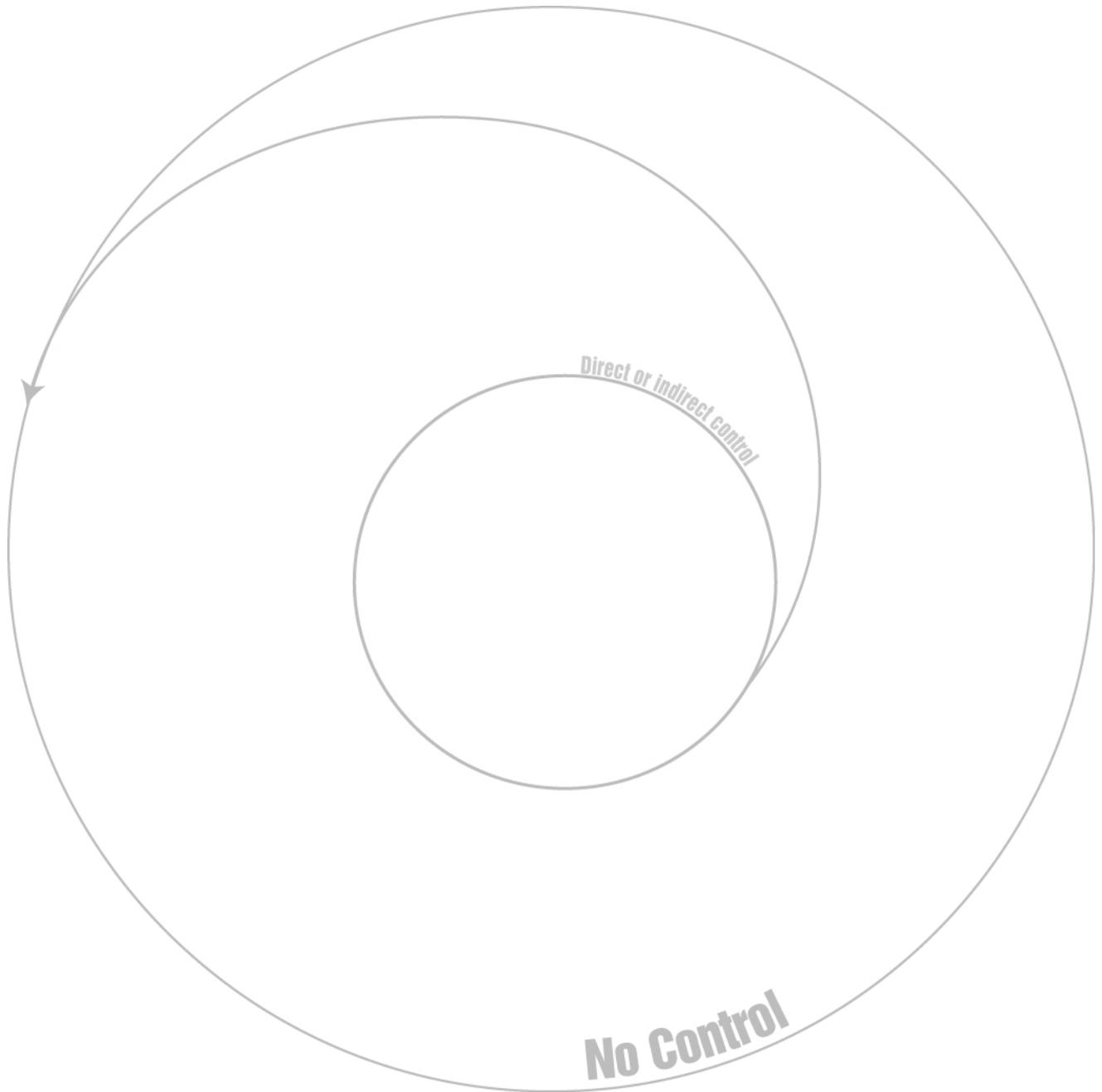
2) Those things you have *indirect* control over, i.e. influencing the behavior of others. In the audio portion, Stephen Covey mentioned an example of doing chores around the house instead of complaining about somebody else not doing them, and then later having a talk about it. If you'd like to influence the behavior of someone but it's not working, what can you do different than what you've been doing but doesn't seem to work?

3) Those things you have no control over: for example, being unexpectedly laid off from a job due to cuts. What are those things in your life right now that you perceive not being able to change through your direct influence?

Exercise: Expanding your Circle of influence

In the smaller circle below, write down those things you have direct control over. In the outer circle, write down those things you perceive to have no control over.

Focus on those items within the inner circle for a week. After a week, or whatever time period is long enough for you to gauge results, examine and write down any changes to both inner and outer circles. Also, write down what things you did that may have had an effect on that change.



IV. The Public Victory: Respect, Communication, and Synergy

Earlier we took a look at the first three of Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, which are taking responsibility for your life (or any given situation), having a purpose or mission that keeps the goal in mind, and taking action toward that goal. These three items comprise the Private Victory, where you take ownership of yourself first before having an effect upon your environment.

The next three of Covey's habits comprise the Public Victory, which are:

4) **Respect** – Regard other people with respect and dignity, with the understanding that whatever the problem or challenge, a win/win scenario is preferable to anything else (win/lose, lose/lose). To achieve a common vision or goal, cooperation is more effective than competition.

5) **Listen** – Seek to listen and understand before you seek to be listened to and understood. Most people listen with the intent to reply, not with the intent to understand. The purpose is to get inside the head of the other and empathize with their view of the situation and of the world. It's not even really to agree. Understanding means giving people psychological air. It's the ultimate affirmation of another person. It shows that you value their perceptions and feelings. Their defenses are lowered, and they stop fighting you.

6) **Developing Synergy** – Propose to come up with something better than what either proposed initially. New ideas and insights are produced, where the whole is truly greater than the sum of its parts. It's on the edge. You don't have to know exactly where things are going to go, but something is now created that wasn't there before. It's the essence of bonding.

Exercise: Resolving Conflict

Think of someone in your business life: at your job, or in your work environment, who you may have conflict with at times. Somebody you get stressed out by. Maybe you don't conflict directly, maybe you don't even talk about it, but they drive you up the wall. Or maybe they just don't seem to get the job done at the level you want or need them to.

How much of their paradigm, about the way they look at their life, do you understand and appreciate? Write down one or two actions you could take to show that you appreciate their point of view, even if you don't completely agree with it.

V. Identifying Your True Gift

Now that you've listened to the CD, watched the DVD and worked through the exercises in this workbook, take a couple of minutes to complete the exercise from the end of the program: Finding Your True Gift.

A common term you often hear for people who want to work for themselves is, "I want to be an entrepreneur." However, most people are not entrepreneurs but they think that's what they're supposed to be because that's the best answer. But you have to separate the vehicle from the outcome. What is it that's going to truly fulfill you? Is it going to be running a business, or creating products for another businessperson to sell?

We all have gifts, but they usually fall into these three categories:

- 1) *Talent* – Creating a product or service using a skill that others don't have. For example, an artist, or writer of computer code.
- 2) *Manager/Leader* – A person who really knows how to lead people, to influence and get things done.
- 3) *Entrepreneur* – The person who can take a gut-load of risks, create the vision and attract the talent and management needed.

Exercise: What's Your Gift?

You may have all three of the abilities listed above. You could do all three, but what would it do to your quality of life?

- 1) Which of the three gifts really fulfills you the most and why?

- 2) What one or two actions can you take now to develop your strengths and spend more time on what you love doing?

The Power of Your True Gift

If you think of your work as a job, your level of enjoyment and fulfillment is going to be extremely low. Chances are there isn't much meaning attached to it: you're doing it for a paycheck.

Ironically enough, to feel alive, you have to work, like when you work your muscles. Maybe in the beginning it's kind of painful, but after a while you start to desire it, you start to want that workout. It's even more true on an emotional, psychological, spiritual level in this thing we call daily work. When you're really expressing your gift, work becomes like a miracle.

Knowing what you are about, knowing what you're committed to, and doing what's necessary within yourself so that you feel alive, strong, clear and directed allows you to give your gift to other people. No matter what we're talking about, if you're going to feel happy, it's because you're making progress. Work is a place that not only demands progress, but offers us an opportunity to create relationships, new content and ideas, concepts, breakthroughs, to solve a problem, or help a human being. We all need that.

“Does that mean I have to enjoy my work?” Yes! That doesn't mean you have to enjoy every moment of everything you have to do and the responsibilities of timelines, but the essence of what you show up to give each day is something that lights you up. When that happens it changes your intimate relationships because you don't come home with the same level of stress. That aliveness is something you can share with your children, your spouse, or your friends.

Remember: Knowing your nature is the secret to fulfillment.