

## Introduction

Do you really want to wake up one day and regret the fact that you missed a great opportunity when you were younger? I know that I don't, and so I am dedicating the best years of my life towards getting the most out of each day. I firmly believe that each day is a gift that you only get to open once and I strive to end each one with pride and satisfaction.

So why should you listen to me? Because I am where you want to be, and I came from where you are now. I know what it feels like to have a good job that is just not good for you. I know what it is like to feel that despite having worked hard to go to college and acquire a useful skill, you are still not happy with your career and dread going to work. And most importantly, I know what it feels like to overcome these challenges and to find a job that is truly satisfying and meets all my needs.

Whenever I question what is really important in life, I first think of the following quote:

*"You only live once, but if you work it right, once is enough."*

*Joe E. Lewis (1902 – 1971)*

You may be feeling now that despite having followed the rules and done everything everyone told you to, you do not feel satisfied with where you are. You feel like you shouldn't really complain. You may have a nice house, a nice car, a nice family, even a nice dog. But yet something keeps bugging you. Something keeps nagging at you, keeping you up at night and causing you to lose your focus.

What is it? It is you. You are trying to tell yourself that despite having been assured that working hard and following orders would make you happy, it hasn't. You want more. You see more. And quite frankly, you deserve more.

The good news is that it is not too late. There is always a chance to turn things around and to reach for the stars. Your only limitations are the ones you create for yourself. In many ways you are your own worst enemy. Unless you are careful, you may spend the rest of your life waiting for your life to begin.

The last few years, specifically 2008 and 2009, have brought enormous challenges to people all around the world. Not only are there very real and serious world economic problems, but there is a constant threat of terrorism, social unrest, and even pandemics. It would be very easy to allow yourself to be deeply affected by all the negative press and to feel discouraged about yourself and your life. But this is precisely the time when opportunities are the most abundant and your chance of success the highest.

According to the United States Census bureau, about three quarters of all U.S. business firms have no payrolls. They are typically self-employed people flying under the radar, slowly building their reputations and making a real difference in today's economy. The recent recession has simultaneously put a lot of corporate giants out of business, decreasing competition and providing room for small businesses to grow.

More traditional ideas about success and prosperity have become unrealistic and unsustainable, and workers are realizing that we have entered an entirely new economic model in which large and monolithic enterprises are no longer viable. A new model in which small and agile businesses now have the advantage is developing. The new economy insists that successful

businesses are able to react quickly and that these businesses are able to closely monitor their markets and rapidly adjust according to their needs.

Now is the time to act. If you have a great idea or a useful skill, you should go for it. Stop waiting for someone to start your life for you. Take control and create your own destiny. I promise you, it will be worth it.

Even if you are not seriously considering a jump to self-employment, you may find value in this book, whose main purpose is to show that it is possible to attain a happy balance between your work and personal life.

In this book, I will tell you how I managed to escape the clutches of corporate America four years ago. Since then, I have written five books, several articles and worked as a software consultant for various companies, including Microsoft- all of this from the comfort of my own home.

At the same time, I have been able to satisfy the ever changing needs of my three young children and become the parent I always wanted to be. The kind of parent that can attend school functions without taking a sick day. The kind of parent that can be home when their kids get off the school bus, and help them with their homework before dinner. The kind of parent that can do all of this and still have time to go running or read a book.

I consider my life so far to be successful. However, if you had asked me ten years ago whether I was happy, I would have told you no. Since then, although I have endured the pain of two failed marriages and tackled the challenge of being a single parent of three children, I am the happiest I have ever been. I am happy because I am able to support my children and be there for

them in the way I want to be. I am also able to make a good living doing what I like, the way that I like to do it.

I will begin by telling you how I got to where I am today. But don't worry; this book will not be entirely about me. To prepare for the book, I interviewed a number of people who are self-employed as consultants or own their own business. I have included the profiles of these individuals at the end of each chapter and also incorporated the incredibly useful things they had to say throughout the book.

All of the people I interviewed made a deliberate choice to break out on their own and they have not regretted the decision. The following is a sneak preview of who these people are, along with a special quote from each one:

- **Roger Arrick** – Owner of the Texas-based electronics and robotics company, Arrick Robotics. Roger has been doing his own thing for many years and of all the people interviewed, he has been the most removed from the corporate world. During my interview with him, I asked him what he thought about the idea of corporate security. His response to me was,

*“I do fully reject the notion that a large corporation provides security. This is often mentioned as a benefit by my friends who work for one, but they are always talking about how they are sweating over the latest round of layoffs. An employee has one customer – their employer. A self-employed person typically has many customers, and losing one of them is survivable.”*

- **Chellie Campbell** - Creator of the incredibly popular Financial Stress Reduction Workshops and author of “The Wealthy Spirit: Daily Affirmations for Financial Stress Reduction”. Chellie believes that the way we think strongly influences how we do in life.

She espouses the idea of repeating daily affirmations to help free yourself from financial stress and make yourself happier at the same time. She had this interesting thing to say,

*“The key factor right now, especially with all the trouble in the economy, is that you have to remain positive and optimistic. Keep an upbeat attitude.”*

- **Alex Cook** – Independent Software Consultant, freelance music journalist and author of the popular and unpopular music review book, “Darkness, Racket and Twang”. Alex has led many different lives and of all the people profiled, he is the only one who has returned to full-time work at a University after being self-employed for three years. However, the opportunity was one he created for himself and also one that makes him very happy. When asked whether he considered himself to be successful Alex said,

*“I think I am successful. I’ve come to realize that success is measured by a lot of different rulers, and comparing how happy I am now as compared to when I was a programmer in a corporate setting, working on projects that I didn’t necessarily care about, then yes, this has been a huge success.”*

- **Mark Dunn** – Owner and President of the Atlanta-based software training and consultation firm, Dunn Training and Consultation. Mark is a smart guy with a strong work ethic, who believes that anything is possible as long as you focus on the long term goals rather than the short term profits. He had this to say about building reputations,

*“Reputations take years to build and minutes to lose. I’ve heard that many times and believe it. I’ve always done whatever it takes to deliver for my customers even when it has cost me considerably to finish.”*

- **Bruce Johnson** – Partner and Principal Consultant of Toronto-based training and consulting firm, ObjectSharp Consulting. Bruce figured out a long time ago that working in the corporate world was not for him and has been working as a consultant for over seventeen years. When asked about setbacks he has faced in his career he has this to say,

*“I believe that as an entrepreneur, it’s important to be willing to take chances. And, as a mental attitude, the ability to stay calm through the tough times and not let setbacks keep you from making the difficult decisions the next time around.”*

- **Annette Pelliccio** – Founder and CEO of the nationwide garden resource network, The Happy Gardener. Annette is a passionate and optimistic person, who found an incredibly unique way to support herself and her family. She had this advice to offer people starting their own businesses,

*“When venturing out on your own it is very important to have that support from family and friends. Your business is going to impact everyone involved and in order for them to not resent it, they must be aware of the goals and steps needed to make it happen.”*

- **Joan Roberts** – Certified Career Management Coach and Owner of CareerCounseling.com. Joan is more than just a Certified Career Management Coach; she is also a good role model for the self-employed. Since 1992, she has been an independent career coach and she loves the fact that the opportunity allows her to help other people while also being there for her children and family.

*“Quitting my job in 1992 to pursue my passion of professional career coaching was one of the best things I have ever done. I always say that on my 34th birthday I gave myself the 'gift of freedom'.”*

If you are wishing for more out of life, or feel unsatisfied with your current situation and have a great idea, but lack the courage to go forward, then this book is for you. In it, I will tell you the benefits of being on your own and what personal characteristics are needed to make this kind of jump. I will also tell you about the things you need to let go of before embarking on your new journey.

Additionally, I will provide information about important things you need to consider such as taxes, insurance and establishing a web presence. And finally, I will tell you the things you need to get started, and helpful things to remember as you move forward.

The most important thing you need to succeed and be happy is a willingness to make the effort to make it come true. The fact that you even picked up this book, indicates that you have that willingness. This is not a “how to get rich quick” story. It is a “how do I maximize my potential and feel satisfied and happy with what I am doing in life” story. If that is the kind of story you are looking for, then I encourage you to read further.