



# How to Decide What You Want

*What seems different in yourself;  
that's the rare thing you possess.  
The one thing that gives each of us his worth,  
and that's just what we try to suppress.  
And we claim to love life.*

André Gide

## Looking Ahead—A Career Instead of a Job

If you don't decide where you want to go, you may wind up drifting from one organization to another whenever you're dissatisfied, with pretty much the same job each time. Even if you decide that you want to continue doing what you're doing right now, that's a goal in itself and may be difficult to achieve.

The first step in career management is goal setting. There are a lot of processes involved in the goal-setting area. But the one considered most central is that by which a person examines his or her past accomplishments, looking at the strongest and most enjoyable skills.

This process is not only the one favored by coaches, it is also the one most often used by successful people. In reading the biographies of such people, I see again and again how they established their goals by identifying those things they enjoy doing and also do well. This process of identifying your *enjoyable accomplishments* is the most important one you can go through.

## What Successful People Do

When Steven Jobs, the founder of Apple Computers, was fired by John Sculley, the man he had brought in to run the company, he felt as though he had lost everything. Apple had been his life. Now he had lost not only his job, but his company. People no longer felt the need to return his phone calls. He did what a lot of us would do. He got depressed. But then:

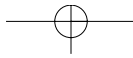
*Confused about what to do next . . . he [Jobs] put himself through an exercise that management psychologists employ with clients unsure about their life goals. It was a little thing, really. It was just a list. A list of all the things that mattered most to Jobs during his ten years at Apple. "Three things jumped off that piece of paper, three things that were really important to me," says Jobs.*

Michael Meyer, *The Alexander Complex*

*Let me listen to me and not to them.*

Gertrude Stein

The exercise Steven Jobs went through is essentially what you will do in the Seven Stories Exercise. The threads that ran through his stories formed the impetus for his next great drive: the formation of NeXT computers. If the Seven Stories Exercise is good enough for Steven Jobs, maybe it's good enough for you.



## Targeting a Great Career

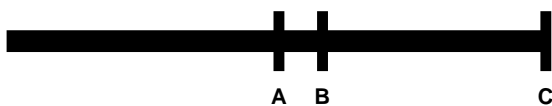
“Successful managers,” says Charles Garfield, head of Performance Services, Inc., in Berkeley, California, “go with their preferences.” They search for work that is important to them, and when they find it they pursue it with a passion.

Lester Korn, chairman of Korn, Ferry, notes in his book *The Success Profile*: “Few executives know, or can know, exactly what they aspire to until they have been in the work force for a couple of years. It takes that long to learn enough about yourself to know what you can do well and what will make you happy. The trick is to merge the two into a goal, then set off in pursuit of it.”

This book will help you decide what you want to do in your next job as well as in the long run. You will become more clear about the experiences you have enjoyed most and may like to repeat. You will also examine your interests and values, and look at past positions to analyze what satisfied you and what did not. In addition, you will look farther ahead (through your Forty-Year Vision) to see if some driving dream may influence what you will want to do in the short term. I did my Forty-Year Vision about 15 years ago, and the vision I had of my future still drives me today.

Knowing where you would like to wind up broadens the kinds of jobs you would be interested in today.

Look at it this way:



The line represents your life. Right now, you are at A. Your next job is B. If you look only at your past to decide what to do next, your next job is limited by what you have already done. For example, if you have been in finance and accounting for the past 15 years, and you base your next move on your past, your next job is likely to be in finance or accounting.

If you know that at C you would like to wind up as vice president of finance and administration, new possibilities open up. Think of all the areas you would manage:

Finance	Operations
Administration	Personnel
Accounting	Computers

Experience in any one of these would advance your career in the right direction. For example, you may decide to get some computer experience.

Without the benefit of a Forty-Year Vision, a move to computers might look like the start of a career in computers, but *you* know it's just one more assignment that leads to your long-term goal. You'll keep your vision in mind and take jobs and assignments that will continually position you for the long run. For example, in the computer area, you may focus on personnel or administrative systems, two areas that fit your goal. Then your computer job will be more than a job. You will work hard for your employer, but you will also know why you are there—you are using your job as a stepping stone to something bigger and better.

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*Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized.*

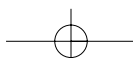
*Make big plans; aim high in hope and work.*

Daniel Burnham

## Happy in Your Work

People are happy when they are working toward their goals. When they get diverted—or don't know what their goals are—they are unhappy. Many people are unhappy in their jobs because they don't know where they are going. People without goals are more irked by petty daily problems than are those with goals.

To control your life, know where you are going, and be ready for your next move—in case the ax falls on you. When you take that next job, continue to manage your career. Companies rarely build career paths for their employees any more. Make your own way. There are plenty of jobs for those who are willing to learn and to change with the times.





# Deciding What You Want: Selecting Your Job Targets

*It may sound surprising when I say, on the basis of my own clinical experience as well as that of my psychological and psychiatric colleagues, "that the chief problem of people in the middle decade of the twentieth century is emptiness." By that I mean not only that many people do not know what they want; they often do not have any clear idea of what they feel.*

Rollo May, *Man's Search for Himself*

Studies have shown that up to 85 percent of all American workers are unhappy in their jobs. They feel that they would be happier elsewhere, but they don't know where. After going through an evaluation process (assessment), many decide that their present situation is not so bad after all, and that no change is required. Some may find that a small change is all that is needed. On the other hand, some may want to make a major career change.

The exercises in this book will help you assess your work life so that you can better understand the situations in which you perform your best and are happiest. And, since we will *all* have to change jobs—and probably even careers—more often in the future, we should get to know ourselves better.

Assessment is helpful even if you do not want to change jobs. You will learn more about the way you operate and how to improve the situation where you are currently working.

*In the Nazi death camps where Victor Frankl learned the principle of proactivity, he also learned the importance of purpose, of meaning in life. The essence of "logotherapy," the philosophy he later developed and taught, is that many so-called mental and emotional illnesses are really symptoms of an underlying sense of meaninglessness or emptiness. Logotherapy eliminates the emptiness by helping the individual to detect his unique meaning, his mission in life. Once you have that sense of mission, you have the essence of your own proactivity. You have the vision and the values which direct your life. You have the basic direction from which you set long- and short-term goals.*

Stephen R. Covey,  
*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

## Getting Started

The following exercises help you identify the aspects of your jobs that have been satisfying and dissatisfying. You will know which parts need to be changed and which parts need to stay the same.

You may do certain exercises and skip others. But don't skip the Seven Stories Exercise, and try to do the Forty-Year Vision. If you have had problems with bosses, you need to discover what those problems were and analyze them. Or perhaps examining your values may be an issue at this time. Your insights about yourself from the Seven Stories Exercise will be the primary source

## Targeting a Great Career

for your accomplishment statements, help you interview better, and serve as a template for selecting the right job.

After you do the exercises, brainstorm a number of possible job targets. Then research each target to find out what the job possibilities are for someone like you.

This workbook will guide you through the entire process.

*To have a great purpose to work for, a purpose larger than ourselves, is one of the secrets of making life significant; for then the meaning and worth of the individual overflow his personal borders, and survive his death.*

Will Durant

## Consider Your History

If you have enjoyed certain jobs, attempt to understand exactly what about them you enjoyed. This will increase your chances of replicating the enjoyable aspects.

For example, an accounting manager will probably not be happy in just any accounting-management job. If what he really enjoyed was helping the business manager make the business profitable, and if this thread of helping reappears in his enjoyable experiences (Seven Stories Exercise), then he would be unhappy in a job where he was *not* helping.

If, however, his enjoyment repeatedly came from resolving messy situations, then he needs a job that has messes to be resolved and the promise of more messes to come.

Furthermore, if he wants to do again those things he enjoyed, he can state them in the summary on his résumé. For instance:

Accounting Manager

Serve as right hand to Business Manager, consistently improving organization's profitability.

or

Accounting Manager

A troubleshooter and turnaround manager.



*"Johnson, if you're going to have negative thoughts, I suggest you get rid of that thought balloon!"*

## The Results of Assessment: Job Targets—Then a Résumé

A job target contains three elements:

- industry or organization size (small, medium, or large organization);
- position or function; and
- geographic location.

If a change is required, a change in any one of these may be enough.

## Geographic Location

Let's take Joseph, for example. Joseph had been in trusts and estates for 25 years, and had taken early retirement. He didn't know what he wanted to do next, but he knew that it had to be *completely different*.

Joseph did all of the exercises in this section. I also gave him a personality test, and did *confidential phone calls* on his behalf—a process by

which I called people who knew him well and asked them about him. I assured them that I would compile the results and not tell him who said what.

Based on all of this information, we developed a number of targets for him to investigate. We also developed a résumé that positioned him for these new targets.

Joseph conducted a campaign to get interviews in each of his three target areas. However, once he clearly looked at these new fields, his old field began to look more appealing. (This happened to me years ago when I desperately wanted museum work—until I actually looked into it and found it wasn't for me.)

Joseph decided to stay in his old field—but on the West Coast rather than the East—because he is bothered by the climate in the East and because many of his old friends had moved West. This change in location would get him out of the old rut and give him a new lease on life. But it was a relatively minor change compared with what he originally had in mind.

## Industry or Organization Size

Many unhappy people may be in essentially the right position but in the wrong industry. A minor adjustment may be all that is needed.

A person could be a lawyer, but it makes a great deal of difference whether that person is a lawyer in a corporation, in a stuffy law firm, or in a not-for-profit organization. A change in industry may end the dissatisfaction.

By the same token, moving from a large organization to a small one—or vice versa—could increase your satisfaction.

## Position or Function

On the other hand, a new field may be what is called for. My own career is a case in point. I had a successful career in computers, advertising, and the financial end of business, with a respectable

amount of prestige and money. However, when I did the Seven Stories Exercise (to identify those things I enjoyed doing and also did well), I discovered that only one of my *stories* related to my work life. The message was clear: My true enjoyment was coming from those things I was doing on the outside, such as running The Five O'Clock Club and other entrepreneurial ventures. I had a choice to make:

- I could stay in the lucrative field I was in, and continue to do on the side those things that gave me the most satisfaction; or
- I could move my career in the direction of those things I found most satisfying.

Being risk averse, I was reluctant to give up the 20-plus years I had invested in a business career for a profession that might prove to be financially or otherwise unsatisfying. I decided to hedge my bets. I took a job as the chief financial officer of a major outplacement firm, and *also* headed up one of their career coaching offices. That way, I could slide into the new career, or go back into the old one if I was unhappy.

Many major career changes are made this way. A person *somehow* gets some experience in the new field while holding on to the old one. In general, it is relatively easy to get experience in the new field if you really want it.

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*... and then I decided that to turn your life around you had to start from the inside.*

Ethan Canin, *Emperor of the Air*

## Looking Ahead—A Career Instead of a Job

Assessment will help you decide what you want to do in your next job as well as in the long run. You will become clearer about the kind of boss you work best with and about all the other things that are important to you in a job.

Through your Forty-Year Vision, you will have the opportunity to look ahead to see whether there is some hidden dream that may dramatically influence what you will want to do in both the short and long run. I did my own Forty-Year Vision about 15 years ago, and the idea I had about my future still drives me today, even though that vision was actually rather vague at the time. Knowing where you would like to wind up in 10, 20, 30, or 40 years can broaden your ideas about the kinds of jobs you would be interested in today.

The Forty-Year Vision is a powerful exercise. It will help you think long term and put things into perspective.

The Seven Stories Exercise is equally powerful. Without it, many job hunters develop stilted descriptions of what they have accomplished. But the exercise frees you up to brag a little, and express things very differently. The results will add life to your résumé and your interviews, and also dramatically increase your self-confidence.

## No Easy Way

It would be nice if you could simply take a test that would tell you what you should be. Unfortunately, there is no such sure-fire test. But fortunately, in today's rapidly changing world, we are allowed to be many things: we can be a doctor, a lawyer, *and* an Indian chief. We have an abundance of choices.

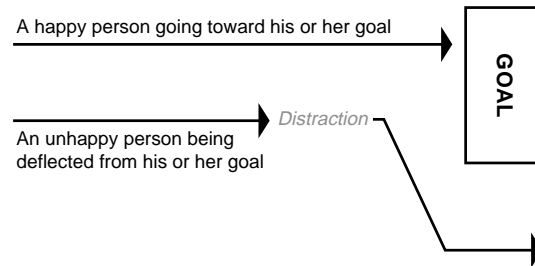
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*A man is what he thinks about all day long.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## A Clear Direction

People are happy when they are working toward their goals. When they get diverted from their goals, they are unhappy. Businesses are the same. When they get diverted from their goals (for instance, because of major litigation or a threatened hostile takeover), they too are unhappy. Life has a way of sneaking up and distracting both individuals and businesses. Many people are unhappy in their jobs because they don't know where they are going.



People without goals are more irked by petty problems on their jobs. Those with goals are less bothered because they have bigger plans. To control your life, you have to know where you are going, and be ready for your next move—in case the ax falls on you.

Even after you take that next job, continue to manage your career. Organizations rarely build career paths for their employees any more. Make your own way.

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*I've never been poor, only broke.  
Being poor is a frame of mind.  
Being broke is only a temporary situation.*

Mike Todd

**Aim So  
High  
You'll  
Never  
Be  
Bored**

The  
greatest waste  
of our  
natural resources  
is the  
number of  
people  
who never  
achieve their  
potential.  
Get out  
of that  
slow lane.  
Shift  
into that  
fast lane.  
If you think  
you can't,  
you won't.  
If you think  
you can,  
there's a  
good chance  
you will.  
Even making  
the effort  
will make  
you feel  
like a new  
person.  
Reputations  
are made  
by searching  
for things that  
can't be done  
and doing them.  
Aim low:  
boring.  
Aim high:  
soaring.

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## Exercises to Analyze Your Past and Present: The Seven Stories Exercise

*The direction of change to seek is not in our four dimensions: it is getting deeper into what you are, where you are, like turning up the volume on the amplifier.*

Thaddeus Golas, *Lazy Man's Guide to Enlightenment*

In this exercise, you will examine your accomplishments, looking at your strongest and most enjoyable skills. The core of most coaching exercises is some version of the Seven Stories exercise. A coach may give you lots of tests and exercises, but this one requires *work* on your part and will yield the most important results. An interest or personality test is not enough. There is no easy way. Remember, busy executives take the time to complete this exercise—if it's good enough for them, it's good enough for you.

*Do not skip the Seven Stories Exercise.* It will provide you with information for your career direction, your résumé, and your interviews. After you do the exercise, brainstorm about a number of possible job targets. Then research each target to find out what the job possibilities are for someone like you.

If you're like most people, you have never taken the time to sort out the things you're good at and also are motivated to accomplish. As a result, you probably don't use these talents as completely or as effectively as you could. Too

often, we do things to please someone else or to survive in a job. Then we get stuck in a rut—that is, we're *always* trying to please someone else or *always* trying to survive in a job. We lose sight of what could satisfy us, and work becomes drudgery rather than fun. When we become so enmeshed in survival or in trying to please others, it may be difficult to figure out what we would rather be doing.

When you uncover your motivated skills, you'll be better able to identify jobs that allow you to use them, and recognize other jobs that don't quite fit the bill. *Motivated skills* are patterns that run through our lives. Since they are skills from which we get satisfaction, we'll find ways to do them even if we don't get to do them at work. We still might not know what these skills are—for us, they're just something we do, and we take them for granted.

Tracking down these patterns takes some thought. The payoff is that our motivated skills do not change. They run throughout our lives and indicate what will keep us motivated for the rest of our lives.

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*One's prime is elusive. . . . You must be on the alert to recognize your prime at whatever time of life it may occur.*

Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

## The Seven Stories Approach: Background

This technique for identifying what people do well and enjoy doing has its roots in the work of Bernard Haldane, who, in his job with the U.S. government 45 years ago, helped to determine assignments for executives entering the armed forces. The Seven Stories (or enjoyable accomplishments) approach, now quite common, was taught to me by George Hafner, who used to work for Haldane.

The exercise is this: Make a list of all the enjoyable accomplishments of your life, those things you enjoyed doing *and also* did well. List at least 25 enjoyable accomplishments from all parts of your life: work, from your early career up to the present; volunteering; hobbies; your school years. It doesn't matter how old you were or what other people thought about these accomplishments, and it doesn't matter whether you got paid for doing them.

Examine those episodes that gave you a sense of accomplishment. Episodes from your childhood are important, too, because they took place when you were less influenced by trying to please others.

You are asked to name 25 accomplishments so you will not be too judgmental—just list anything that occurs to you. Expect this exercise to take you four or five days. Most people carry around a piece of paper so they can jot things down as they occur to them. When you have 25, select the seven that are most important to you by however you define important. Then rank them: List the most important first, and so on.

Starting with your first story, write a paragraph about each accomplishment. Then find out what your accomplishments have in common. If you are having trouble doing the exercises, ask a friend to help you talk them through. Friends tend to be more objective and will probably point out strengths you never realized.

You will probably be surprised. For example, you may be especially good interacting with peo-

ple, but it's something you've always done and therefore take for granted. This may be a thread that runs through your life and may be one of your motivated skills. It *may* be that you'll be unhappy in a job that doesn't allow you to deal with people.

When I did the Seven Stories Exercise, one of the first stories I listed was from when I was 10 years old, when I wrote a play to be put on by the kids in the neighborhood. I rehearsed everyone, sold tickets to the adults for two cents apiece, and served cookies and milk with the proceeds. You might say that my direction as a *general manager*—running the whole show, thinking things up, getting everybody working together—was set in the fourth grade. I saw these traits over and over again in each of my stories.

After I saw those threads running through my life, it became easy for me to see what elements a job must have to satisfy me. When I interview for a job, I can find out in short order whether it addresses my motivated skills. If it doesn't, I won't be as happy as I could be, even though I *may decide to take the job as an interim step toward a long-term goal*. The fact is, people won't do as well in the long run in jobs that don't satisfy their motivated skills.

Sometimes I don't pay attention to my own motivated skills, and I wind up doing things I regret. For example, in high school I scored the highest in the state in math. I was as surprised as everyone else, but I felt I finally had some direction in my life. I felt I had to use it to do something constructive. When I went to college, I majored in math. I almost flunked because I was bored with it. The fact is that I didn't enjoy math, I was simply good at it.

There are lots of things we're good at, but they may not be the same things we really enjoy. The trick is to find those things we are good at, enjoy doing, and feel a sense of accomplishment from doing.

To sum up: Discovering your motivated skills is the first step in career planning. I was a general manager when I was 10, but I didn't realize it. I'm

## Targeting a Great Career

a general manager now, and I love it. In between, I've done some things that have helped me toward my long-range goals, and other things that have not helped at all.

It is important to realize that the Seven Stories Exercise will *not* tell you exactly which job you should have, but the *elements* to look for in a job that you will find satisfying. You'll have a range of jobs to consider, and you'll know the elements the jobs must have to keep you happy. Once you've selected a few job categories that might satisfy you, talk to people in those fields to find out if a particular job is really what you want, and the job possibilities for someone with your experience. That's one way to test if your aspirations are realistic.

After you have narrowed your choices down to a few fields with some job possibilities that will satisfy your motivated skills, the next step is to figure out how to get there. That topic will be covered in our book *Shortcut Your Job Search*.

*... be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a foreign tongue.*

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

## A Demonstration of the Seven Stories Exercise

To get clients started, I sometimes walk them through two or three of their achievement stories, and tell them the patterns I see. They can then go off and think of the seven or eight accomplishments they enjoyed the most and also performed well. This final list is ranked and analyzed in depth to get a more accurate picture of the person's motivated skills. I spend the most time analyzing those accomplishments a client sees as most important. Some accomplishments are more obvious than others. But all stories can be analyzed.



*"I realize I'm only 3 years old, but have 21 years of experience."*

Here is Suzanne, as an example: "When I was nine years old, I was living with my three sisters. There was a fire in our house and our cat had hidden under the bed. We were all outside, but I decided to run back in and save the cat. And I did it."

No matter what the story is, I probe a little by asking these two questions: What gave you the sense of accomplishment? and What about that made you proud? These questions give me a quick fix on the person.

The full exercise is a little more involved than this. Suzanne said at first: "I was proud because I did what I thought was right." I probed a little, and she added: "I had a sense of accomplishment because I was able to make an instant decision under pressure. I was proud because I overcame my fear."

I asked Suzanne for a second story; I wanted to see what patterns might emerge when we put the two together:

"Ten years ago, I was laid off from a large company where I had worked for nine years.

I soon got a job as a secretary in a Wall Street company. I loved the excitement and loved that job. Six weeks later, a position opened up on the trading floor, but I didn't get it at first. I eventually was one of three finalists, and they tried to discourage me from taking the job. I wanted to be given a chance. So I sold myself because I was determined to get that job. I went back for three interviews, said all the right things, and eventually got it."

**What was the accomplishment?  
What made her proud?**

- "I fought to win."
- "I was able to sell myself. I was able to overcome their objections."
- "I was interviewed by three people at once. I amazed myself by saying, 'I know I can do this job.'"
- "I determined who the real decision maker was, and said things that would make him want to hire me."
- "I loved that job—loved the energy, the upness, the fun."

Here it was, 10 years later, and that job still stood out as a highlight in her life. Since then she'd been miserable and bored, and that's why she came to me.

Normally after a client tells two stories, we can quickly name the patterns we see in both stories. What were Suzanne's patterns?

Suzanne showed that she was good at making decisions in tense situations—both when saving the cat and when interviewing for that job. She showed a good intuitive sense (such as when she determined who the decision maker was and how to win him over). She's decisive and likes fast-paced, energetic situations. She likes it when she overcomes her own fears as well as the objections of others.

We needed more than two stories to see if these patterns ran throughout Suzanne's life and to see what other patterns might emerge. After the full exercise, Suzanne felt for sure that she wanted excitement in her jobs, a sense of urgency—that she wanted to be in a position where she had a chance to be decisive and operate intuitively. Those are the conditions she enjoys and under which she operates the best. Armed with this information, Suzanne can confidently say in an interview that she thrives on excitement, high pressure, and quick decision making. And, she'll probably make more money than she would in *safe* jobs. She can move her life in a different direction—whenever she is ready.

Pay attention to those stories that were most important to you. The elements in these stories may be worth repeating. If none of your enjoyable accomplishments were work related, it may take great courage to eventually move into a field where you will be happier. Or you may decide to continue to have your enjoyment outside of work.

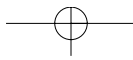
People have to be ready to change. Fifteen years ago, when I first examined my own motivated skills, I saw possibilities I was not ready to handle. Although I suffered from extreme shyness, my stories—especially those that occurred when I was young—gave me hope. As I emerged from my shyness, I was eventually able to act on what my stories said was true about me.

People sometimes take immediate steps after learning what their motivated skills are. Or sometimes this new knowledge can work inside them until they are ready to take action—maybe 10 years later. All the while internal changes can be happening, and people can eventually blossom.

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*If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with success unexpected in common hours.*

Henry David Thoreau



## Motivated Skills—Your Anchor in a Changing World

Your motivated skills are your anchor in a world of uncertainty. The world will change, but your motivated skills remain constant.

Write them down. Save the list. Over the years, refer to them to make sure you are still on target—doing things that you do well and are motivated to do. As you refer to them, they will influence your life. Five years from now, an opportunity may present itself. In reviewing your list, you will have every confidence that this opportunity is right for you. After all, you have been doing these things since you were a child, you know that you enjoy them, and you do them well!

Knowing our patterns gives us a sense of stability and helps us understand what we have

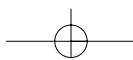
done so far. It also gives us the freedom to try new things regardless of risk or of what others may say, because we can be absolutely sure that this is the way we are. Knowing your patterns gives you both security and flexibility—and you need both to cope in this changing world.

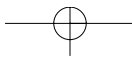
Now think about your own stories. Write down everything that occurs to you.

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*The Ugly Duckling was so happy and in some way he was glad that he had experienced so much hardship and misery; for now he could fully appreciate his tremendous luck and the great beauty that greeted him. . . . And he rustled his feathers, held his long neck high, and with deep emotion he said: "I never dreamt of so much happiness, when I was the Ugly Duckling!"*

Hans Christian Anderson, *The Ugly Duckling*





# The Seven Stories Exercise™ Worksheet

This exercise is an opportunity to examine the most satisfying experiences of your life and to discover those skills you will want to use as you go forward. You will be looking at the times when you feel you did something particularly well that you also enjoyed doing. It doesn't matter what other people thought, whether or not you were paid, or when in your life the experiences took place. **All that matters is that you felt happy about doing whatever it was, thought you did it well, and experienced a sense of accomplishment.** You can even go back to childhood. When I did my own Seven Stories Exercise, I remembered the time when I was 10 years old and led a group of kids in the neighborhood, enjoyed it, and did it well.

This exercise usually takes a few days to complete. Many people review different life phases in order to capture the full scope of these experiences. Most carry around a piece of paper to jot down ideas as they think of them.

## Section I

Briefly outline below *all* the work/personal/life experiences that meet the above definition. Come up with at least 20. We ask for 20 stories so you won't be too selective. Just write down anything that occurs to you, no matter how trivial it may seem. Try to **think of concrete examples, situations, and tasks, not generalized skills or abilities.** It may be helpful if you say to yourself, "**There was the time when I . . .**"

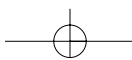
### RIGHT

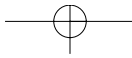
- Got extensive media coverage for new product launch.
- Delivered speech to get German business.
- Coordinated blood drive for division.
- Came in third in Nassau Bike Race.
- Made basket in second grade.

### WRONG

- Writing press releases.
- Delivering speeches.
- Coordinating.
- Cycling.
- Working on projects alone.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
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- 13. \_\_\_\_\_
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- 23. \_\_\_\_\_
- 24. \_\_\_\_\_
- 25. \_\_\_\_\_

### Section II

**Choose the seven experiences from the above** that you enjoyed the most and felt the most sense of accomplishment about. (Be sure to include non-job-related experiences also.) Then **rank them**. Then, for each accomplishment, describe what *you* did. Be specific, listing each step in detail. Notice the role you played and your relationship with others, the subject matter, the skills you used, and so on. Use a separate sheet of paper for each.

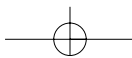
If your highest-ranking accomplishments also happen to be work related, you may want them to appear prominently on your résumé. After all, those were things that you enjoyed and did well. And those are probably experiences you will want to repeat again in your new job.

Here's how you might begin:

Experience #1: Planned product launch that resulted in 450 letters of intent from 1,500 participants.

- a. Worked with president and product managers to discuss product potential and details.
- b. Developed promotional plan.
- c. Conducted five-week direct-mail campaign prior to conference to create aura of excitement about product.
- d. Trained all product demonstrators to make sure they each presented product in same way.
- e. Had great product booth built; rented best suite to entertain prospects; conducted campaign at conference by having teasers put under everyone's door every day of conference. Most people wanted to come to our booth.

—and so on—



## Analyzing Your Seven Stories

Now it is time to analyze your stories. You are trying to look for the threads that run through them so that you will know the things you do well that also give you satisfaction. Some of the questions below sound similar. That's okay. They are a catalyst to make you think more deeply about the experience. The questions don't have any hidden psychological significance.

If your accomplishments happen to be mostly work related, this exercise will form the basis for your *positioning* or summary statement in your résumé, and also for your Two-Minute Pitch.

If these accomplishments are mostly not work related, they will still give you some idea of how you may want to slant your résumé, and they may give you an idea of how you will want your career to go in the long run.

For now, simply go through each story without trying to force it to come out any particular way. Just think hard about yourself. And be as honest as you can. When you have completed this analysis, the words in the next exercise may help you think of additional things. **Do this page first.**

**Story #1.** \_\_\_\_\_

What was the *main accomplishment* for you? \_\_\_\_\_

What about it did you *enjoy most*? \_\_\_\_\_

What did you *do best*? \_\_\_\_\_

What was your *key motivator*? \_\_\_\_\_

What *led up to your getting involved*? (e.g., assigned to do it, thought it up myself, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

What was your *relationship with others*? (e.g., leader, worked alone, inspired others, team member, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the *environment* in which you performed. \_\_\_\_\_

What was the *subject matter*? (e.g., music, mechanics, trees, budgets, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

**Story #2.** \_\_\_\_\_

Main accomplishment? \_\_\_\_\_

Enjoyed most? \_\_\_\_\_

Did best? \_\_\_\_\_

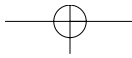
Key motivator? \_\_\_\_\_

What led up to it? \_\_\_\_\_

Your role? \_\_\_\_\_

Environment? \_\_\_\_\_

Subject matter? \_\_\_\_\_



**Story #3.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Main accomplishment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Enjoyed most? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Did best? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Key motivator? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What led up to it? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Your role? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Environment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject matter? \_\_\_\_\_

**Story #4.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Main accomplishment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Enjoyed most? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Did best? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Key motivator? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What led up to it? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Your role? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Environment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject matter? \_\_\_\_\_

**Story #5.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Main accomplishment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Enjoyed most? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Did best? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Key motivator? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What led up to it? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Your role? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Environment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject matter? \_\_\_\_\_

**Story #6.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Main accomplishment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Enjoyed most? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Did best? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Key motivator? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What led up to it? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Your role? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Environment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject matter? \_\_\_\_\_

**Story #7.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Main accomplishment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Enjoyed most? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Did best? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Key motivator? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What led up to it? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Your role? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Environment? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject matter? \_\_\_\_\_

*We are here to be excited from youth to old age, to have an insatiable curiosity about the world. . . . We are also here to help others by practicing a friendly attitude. And every person is born for a purpose. Everyone has a God-given potential, in essence, built into them. And if we are to live life to its fullest, we must realize that potential.*

Norman Vincent Peale

