

Creating Your Dream Job Workbook



by Michael G. Neece
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During our earliest days of job hunting, most of us listen to our friends, family, and college professors' advice, apply for available positions, and then take what looks like a good offer. Before we know it, we could be a few years down a path that feels more like a trap than a career.

I felt lost and empty when I was a few jobs into my working life. It wasn't that the jobs were bad ones, but it always felt like I had stumbled into a workplace where other people knew why they were there while I did not. It felt like a big secret that I had no clue why I was there. The longer I stayed, the more I picked up skills and knowledge everyone valued, so the more I was promoted and given meaningful projects. Meaningful to someone, but often not to me.



By the time you have worked for a few years, you, too, might feel sleepless, anxious, worried, and even lost. It might finally hit you: Enough of this! I am meant for something else! I don't even know why I'm in this job! Isn't there more to life than what I'm doing right now?

Many of us dread the question, "What do you want?" because we have been conditioned to think that a reprimand is coming when we answer. For example, if you think of saying out loud that you want more pay at work, more sex in your romantic relationship, a nicer home, or a kinder boss, do you worry

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about who will overhear you? You may feel trepidation over even saying one or several of those things aloud with crystal clarity. But...

It is okay to want the things you genuinely want.

Quite often, we hear the voices of our friends and family telling us that we want too much, that what we want is impossible, or that our desires are somehow petty or morally flawed. This means that what we want might feel a bit mysterious because we have suppressed it for so long. This is where you can revive those instincts, outlining and better understanding your beliefs, values, and desires.

To get the most out of these exercises and define what your dream job looks like, it's recommended that you have a journal to keep track of your thoughts. If you haven't purchased one yet, there are pages in this workbook for capturing your thoughts, so use those as needed.

Let's get started!

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Exercise 1: Identifying Inspiration

Step 1: Find Inspiration

To make progress in life feel easy, almost effortless even, identify what inspires you. You probably already have a mental list of what drives you, like food, music, stories, travel, companionship, or learning new things. Make that list concrete by writing down everything you can think of that inspires you.

It can be helpful to reflect on anything that has motivated you recently or garnered a comment from a friend or coworker regarding how energized you have been since some event.

Ponder any relationships with mentors, teachers, or adults you admire. List anything about those people and those relationships that have felt inspirational.

Step 2: Make Your Current Workplace Better

Using whatever list you just created in your journal, your mission is to add as many of these elements into your daily life as possible. If you feel energized when listening to music, create and update playlists to hear that music. If you love hearing stories about successful disaster relief, find news sources that dwell less on the disaster and more on the successful support provided. If you find that a particular teacher believed in you and made you feel excited about life, use the lessons they taught to continue building the life you want.

With sources of inspiration cataloged and understood, take the final step: list ways of infusing those sources of inspiration into your workplace, your work tasks, and your career, and then do it. Use these new ideas to make your workplace *your* workplace. You might need alignment from your

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supervisor and colleagues to make them stick, so talk through your ideas whenever you feel it will help.

For anything else, dive in and make your work more inspired.

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Exercise 2: Creating a Compass for Your Life

While a compass points to a true magnetic north here on Earth, your life's compass points toward your ideal life. So, let's make one to keep you aware of where you want to go versus where you are headed at any moment.

If you prefer the written word to guide you, use your journal. If you are more visual, there are several tools you can use to put images in the forefront, including Pinterest and Microsoft PowerPoint. I suggest using Microsoft OneNote for those preferring a visual and written word version. (If none of these is available, you can use the space below each prompt.)

Using the four categories of 1) values and beliefs, 2) Life goals, 3) Long-term goals, and 4) Short-term goals, start defining your life.

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Values and beliefs are the ideas that guide why you act and how you act. If you believe running a pet store is the best fit for your life, the values could be “pets deserve good lives” and “pet owners need good resources to care for their pets.” The belief could be that “pets have worth because they have feelings and need love just like humans do.”

Values and Beliefs

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Life goals are the things you hope to accomplish during your life. While these could be work-related, they need more context than your career or specific jobs. If you wish to marry, travel, or create beautiful paintings, these life projects must be on the list. By starting with this list, you break down the steps needed across your lifetime to accomplish these big goals. With this list in place, it can be easier to know tasks that need to be done in the next ten days, let alone the next ten years.

Life Goals (as far into your future as you can imagine)

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Long-term goals are the steps you need to take to support your life goals. Long-term goals give you a sense of how to reach each life goal. Any long-term goal, like marrying, traveling, creating beautiful paintings, or opening a pet shop, will require more than good intentions. It will also demand knowledge and money. Each long-term goal could spawn several other goals or, at the very least, could be interdependent with other goals. An example would be owning a pet shop (goal one) requiring specific education (goal two), certifications (goal three), plus enough starter money (goal four) to afford rent on a building and starter inventory.

Long Term Goals (within the next five years)

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Short-term goals are the tasks or projects you need to do in the next year to support your long-term goals.

Short Term Goals (within the next year)

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As you create your vision for your life, remember that your values and beliefs are like a compass showing you a reliable direction. The goals, be they short-term, long-term, or life goals, can take longer because of obstacles, your health and energy level, unexpected changes in employment, or other unforeseen circumstances. Your goals can just as quickly change because you achieved things faster than you previously thought possible.

Knowing more about what you hope for in your life, how does your current company align? Should you be looking for a new job? Try exercise 3 to determine what your current workplace looks like compared to your dream job.

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Exercise 3: Research your Current and Potential Workplaces

If your preferred industry has visible public flaws that go against your code of ethics, such as well-known personalities who stand out for all the wrong reasons, it's essential to factor this into your job search. Consider whether there are companies within that industry that stand apart, where leaders have sterling reputations and employees are treated fairly. Choosing such a company could provide you with a refuge amidst the challenging industry conditions. Moreover, don't forget that a job is not a lifelong commitment. It's like a yoga pose; you don't hold it forever.

Read reputable online business news, like the *Wall Street Journal* and local online business publications. These can be key to knowing if your industry has promise or if you are jumping onto a sinking ship. The earlier you are in your career, the more industry longevity will matter to you.

When considering a company you could work for, knowing how the industry views that company and its leaders can be critical. If leadership has changed at a company, where did the leaders previously work, and what were they known for at their old company? If a leader is known for trimming away the workforce, that leader is likely to do the same at a new company. By learning these trends, you can make the invisible forces visible before you make your decisions.

Another way that local newspapers and business journals can be helpful before you land that golden opportunity is by featuring stories about your potential new work site. For example, Bizjournals.com has news about what's going on in over 40 major cities in the U.S. If you know more about the relationship between the state and local communities, and the company you are hoping to work for, you might find out that the local site is under threat of closing, or perhaps it only just opened

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and signed a 5-year lease. Any details you gather will help you piece together the story before you invest time chasing an unstable job.

List in your journal or below what you discovered about your current company and any other companies you might have researched.

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When reshaping your current workplace into a place where you'd like to work for years to come, you make your current situation the best it can be. If it's not in the right industry or isn't fully aligned with your beliefs, values, or goals, these improvements are temporary for you, but could be deeply meaningful for others if you have had a positive impact on your work culture. It will help you realize how much of an impact you have in the workplace and how much you value the things you have worked to create.



If you are ready to jump to another company where you think juicy new roles might be, where the workforce is aligned with things you value and believe in, this workbook has helped you craft a vision of what that looks like. By researching companies where you could work, you have further opened yourself to other possibilities.

Congratulations on taking this significant step into the future of your choosing by pouring your ideas into this idea book! Now, put reminders on your calendar to keep up with these new practices and keep up the good work!

Want more help? Schedule a free call with me:



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