

Your Essential Guide to Career Excellence

Celestine Chua

The Personal Excellence Blog

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About

Hi there! ☺ My name is Celestine Chua and I'm very passionate about growing and helping others, like you, grow – So much so that I left my Fortune 100 career in 2008 to pursue this passion full-time. Today, I'm a full-time [personal excellence coach](#) and blogger at The [Personal Excellence](#) Blog, which has over 100+ free personal excellence articles in 35+ categories to date. Some [readers' favorite articles](#) include: [Are You Sleepwalking Your Life Away?](#), [101 Most Inspiring Quotes of All Time](#) and [Cultivate Good Habits](#) in 21 Days

This document is a compilation of some of my top articles on [career excellence](#), put together neatly in a pdf for your easy reading. The articles covered include: how to nab that job interview, ways to be more productive, how to deal with stress, and more. If you are someone who is keen to achieve excellence in your career, you will find here information incredibly helpful in your journey.

Hope you enjoy this pdf and I'll love to [hear your feedback](#). If you like the writings here, you'll love what's available at The [Personal Excellence](#) Blog, where there are even more articles on how to achieve personal excellence. I look forward to seeing you there! ☺



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Be your best self, Live your best life.

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You Are the CEO of Your Life

In this article, I am going to introduce to you a powerful idea which struck a chord in me when I first heard it; It can help to change your perception of your life and induce you to start taking action on it. I first got this idea when I was listening to the podcast Human Being Inc by Robin Sharma, a self-help guru and author of best seller 'The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari'.

All of us earn a living, in some way or another. We may be employees of a larger company, be it SMEs (small and medium enterprises), MNCs (multi-national corporations) or entrepreneurs running our own business. During our working hours, we serve the vision of our employer or our business. We manage a huge plate of responsibilities, being part of projects, learning best in class strategies and practices, getting training, immersing in the company culture – All to meet the end objective of the company. Some people, the workaholics, devote their whole life to working – even after work and during weekends. Their life is essentially tied to serving their company.

What if - *You start viewing our life as your company instead?*

Think about it. **Your life is your company. You are the CEO of your life.** Ask yourself the following questions:

How are you performing as the CEO of your company? Are you a star performer? Are you leading your life to its highest possible success?

How is your company performing? The status of your company will be akin to your overall status in life. Is it a leader in the market place? Is the business growing year on year? Is the share price increasing and will investors want to invest in it? Or is it struggling to survive? Is it on the verge of crumbling and folding down?

What is the vision and mission statement of your company? The vision of a company enables it to align its resources to a singular direction, like your purpose. Its mission statement is an articulation of the vision in more specific terms, such as your life goals. What is the overarching purpose of your life? Have you [discovered your purpose](#)? What are your life goals? Have you identified them? Without

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clarity on these, everything in your life is randomly scattered and not optimized towards a common direction. There will be no singular focus at all.

What are your company's long term and short term goals? Companies have 10 year goals which are subsequently broken down into 5, 3, 1 year goals. The 1-year goal is then further broken down into bi-annual, quarter and monthly milestones. What are the 10-year goals of your life? Are they identified and put down into writing? Are they broken down into smaller milestones?

How are your different departments doing? Every company has a series of departments, such as Marketing, Finance, Product Supply, Research & Development, Market Research, etc. Within those departments, there will be its own set of sub-divisions. Look at the departments and sub-divisions of your life – Health (Diet, Fitness), Relationships (Social, Love, Family), Career, Wealth, Spirituality, etc. What are the statuses of those departments and sub-divisions in your life?

Many people fall into the trap of overly focusing in the department of career and wealth, but neglect all the rest. They do not realize that all the departments need to be performing at the peak to lead to your best life. Companies have separate departments to serve a specific function; Without the investment of resources, the departments cannot perform their job well. Have you seen companies which scrimp on marketing budgets, only to have the campaigns fail because of lack of awareness? Or companies that neglect their human resources and welfare, only to lead to a high turnover rate due to disgruntlements among employees? Likewise, you cannot neglect your health and relationships and expect your life to be soaring. These departments in your life exist for a reason to serve its particular unique function, which ladder up to your company's performance. If you neglect your health department, a series of health issues will arise later which affects your larger life. If you neglect your relationships department, the bonds of your friendships will start weakening and friends will start drifting away. Are you neglecting certain departments in your life?

What is your organizational culture? Companies have its own set of organizational culture, values and principles which defines how it is run and how its employees behave. The equivalent of the organizational culture in our life will be our personality, our values systems, our beliefs. What are the core traits which define you and your being? What are your values and principles in life? What is the moral code you abide by? What are your beliefs in your life? Whether we are aware of it or not, these influence our everyday action and thinking.

What about the processes in your company? Depending on the size of the company, it will have varying levels and complexities in processes. A small company typically has few processes in place; a large conglomerate has a multitude of structured processes it runs by. The processes would include annual/bi-annual/quarterly reviews, monthly team discussions, weekly updates, etc.

Processes are like routines or habits and practices in our life. What routines do you have in place? Do you wake up early and sleep early everyday? Do you have a daily or weekly exercise schedule? Do you have time set aside for social relationships every week? Do

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you have monthly reviews to see how your life is tracking to? How are your routines or lack of routines contributing to the performance of your life? What are the detrimental habits and practices you should be doing away with? Is there opportunity to institute new practices to improve your life?

Are you investing in best in class training for your company? Successful companies spend a lot of money hiring consultants and trainers to give formal training courses. There are also informal trainings that take place, via day-to-day on the job learning. Are you constantly acquiring new knowledge and information via resources such as books, websites, podcasts, etc? Are you getting in the act and putting yourself in different contexts to learn and grow? Some people may be very knowledgeable in a certain department such as how to build a successful career, but they are clueless when it comes to other areas of their life. Do you know what it takes to lead your life to success and abundance? Do you know what is needed to keep your health in top condition? Do you know what it takes to be a good partner and friend? Are you aware of what is needed to build a conducive family environment?

At the end of the day, your career is only one aspect of your life. It is only one department of your whole company. As the CEO of your company, you need to ensure everything is in place to ensure the peak performance and success, instead of just focusing on a small aspect. Many people fail to see that. They devote their whole lives to their work and turn into workaholics, neglecting the other parts of their life in the process. They do not view their life in the way they should – **holistically, rather than one small segment.**

In my previous job in brand management, I would see people dedicating so much of their time and energy to improving the business everyday, including myself. I saw directors and vice presidents who were so exceptional at their work. I wondered – What if their life is their company then? How would they run it? **What if we were to apply all these world-class practices, rigor, standards to all our own lives?** Without a question of doubt, the quality of our lives will soar dramatically. We will be truly getting the best out of our lives, instead of living it in a suboptimal manner.

When I first applied this concept to my life nearly 2 years ago, I realized that while I may had certain elements of a good company in place, my company was actually in a rocky position. There were several glaring areas that needed addressing and resolution right away to ensure long term growth and success.

For example, even though I had my vision (purpose) defined, my mission statement (life goals) and specific 10, 5, 3, 1 year goals for my life were not all that clear. I had some idea of my organizational culture (self-awareness, personality), but it was fuzzy – I realized there were still many blind spots I had which I was not aware of. I realized even though I was thriving in my career department and doing 'not bad' in my social department, the other areas in my life were sorely neglected. For example, Health – I was constantly putting off sleep in favour of my work. My diet was okay but not the healthiest. I was not exercising as much as I should. Family – My relationships with my parents and brother had waned since I was a teenager, and it had been that way ever since. Love – I was not seeing anyone and

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there was no one in particular I was attracted to. Process-wise, the processes (habits, routines) in my life were not in place – I was largely a disorganized person.

All in all, I was performing very well as an employee in my work, but as the CEO of my life? Not that well. The idea of being the CEO really made me think more holistically. It made me see my life for what it is, and not just narrowed down to one or two areas, such as Career or Relationships. It made me realize that it was up to me to lead my whole life to my vision. It made me step up to be a real personal leader and start truly leading my life the way it should be led. As the CEO, I want my company to be the best it can ever be – because it deserves nothing less.

And this goes the same for you as well. As your CEO, you want your company to soar to roaring heights. As your CEO, you have the ability to do whatever it takes to turn your company around, no matter what state it is in. As your CEO, only you have power to lead it to success.

Look at your life today and start applying this concept to yourself. How is your company performing? What are your visions and goals for your company? Are you leading your company to become the best it can be? What should you start doing today to bring your company to its top level success? Are you being the best CEO you can be?

Original Article: <http://celestinechua.com/blog/2008/12/you-are-the-ceo-of-your-life/>

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30 Tips to Rule Your Job Interview

When I was chatting over dinner with two of my good friends a couple of months back, one of the topics we talked about was job interviews. One of my friends (who is still a student) said she was glad she was still studying because she found the prospect of job interviews scary. To her, the thought of having someone grill you face-to-face with questions and being in the pressure to think on your feet was quite overwhelming.

I found her adversity towards interviews quite interesting. While interviews can seem a little intimidating, they are definitely manageable with the right level of preparation. In fact, as you do more of them, you will find them to be easier and easier – and something to look forward to! Personally, I find interviews a very awareness raising experience. I remember that every time I had an interview in the past, it always felt like such an adrenaline rush!

30 Job Interview Tips

In my years as a business student and in the corporate world, I learned numerous things on what's important in an interview and how to win over your interviewers from seminars, reading different resources and personal experience. Here are 30 job interview tips which will come in handy as you are preparing for your interview – apply them to dramatically increase your odds of securing that job 😊

1. **First and foremost, be clear that this is a job you want.** Is this a job that you really want? [Be clear on your end objective for this task.](#) Only accept the interview if there is a possibility that you will accept the job offer after you get it. Otherwise, you will only be wasting their time and your time – plus it creates bad will if you reject an offer later on without a valid reason. You never know when you might want to join this company in the future.
2. **Check up who your interviewers are before the job interview.** What are their names? What are their designations? What are they working on? Try to get some broad-based information on them before the interview. This will let you prepare better for the interview on how to best express yourself and connect with them during the interview.

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3. **Research on the interview style of the company.** Different industries have different interview styles, and even within companies they have different tests too. These ranges from stress panel interview (with 4 or more interviewers), 2 on 1 interview, 1 on 1 interview, group interview (interview with a few candidates together), and so on. Within these interviews, the kind of questions asked also varies. Some interviews focus on behavioral questions, some on case studies, some test general knowledge questions, and so on. Be clear on what these are because it is critical in your preparation.
4. **Connect with people who have been through the interviews before.** There is no better way to learn than to talking to someone who has been through the experience. Learn from them how the whole process was like, the questions asked, any surprise elements, how you can better prepare, etc.
5. **Connect with company's employees.** Do you have any friends who work inside? Friends' friends? Connect with them and try to learn as much as you can about the company, its culture, organization, the interview process, etc. This will give you very valuable insights on whether for your interview.
6. **Research on the company background.** What does it do? What products do they have? How is their performance in the past few years? What is the status of the company now? What are the latest news surrounding the company? How is its culture? How is its structure? How many regions and countries is it in? Which are its biggest markets? Find out as much relevant information as you can about the company that you feel will come in handy for your job interview.
7. **Research on the job you are interviewing for.** What is your role about? How many people will you be working with? What will you be doing? Does it require traveling? As you think about these questions, think about what you have to offer that will be a perfect fit for this role as well as the company.
8. **Be clear on how many candidates are up for the interview.** This helps to give you an indication on the intensity of competition for the role.
9. **Be clear on what you have to offer.** What are your strengths and weaknesses? What achievements have you had? Why should the company choose you over another candidate? What do you have to offer to them? How does your knowledge, skillsets and abilities fit with what they are looking for?

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10. **Rehearse the interview with a friend.** Nothing like a trial run before the real thing. After all, practice makes perfect. Brief your friend on the interview style of the company and simulate an interview scenario with her, where she interviews you. Anticipate questions they will ask.

11. **Dress right.** Check with the HR or your headhunter on the right dress code before the interview. Generally, formal office wear will work right.

12. **Be 5 minutes early for the interview.** The worst thing you can do is be late for the interview. It sets the wrong tone and you don't want to be entering your interview hot, sweaty and flustered either. Be early rather than late; make sure you set off for the place earlier by 15~30 minutes. Reaching earlier helps you to cool down and prepare yourself mentally. If you reach much earlier, just hang around the vicinity and enter the office 5 minutes before your interview time.

13. **Check how you look before your interview.** Just a quick check to ensure your hair is in its place, there's nothing on your face and nothing stuck in your teeth. The last thing you want is to finish an interview smiling and grinning, then realize there's a big piece of vegetable stuck in your front tooth afterwards!

14. **Give them a firm handshake.** Your handshake should be firm and steady. Your handshake gives them an initial impression on the kind of person you are. If it's a solid shake, they will think of you as a confident and firm person. If you have sweaty palms, make sure you wipe them before you shake their hands!

15. **Ask them for their namecards (and give them yours).** Before the interview, your interviewers will typically offer you their namecard. If not, you can request for it. This will come into handy after the interview (see Tip #30). If you have your own personal name card, give them the card before the interview starts. When I was in business school last time, my school provided all the students with their own namecards as a way for us to easily network with prospective employers and people in the industry. As small a gesture this may be, it helps leave an impression. You never know how it may come in useful.

16. **Be confident in yourself.** The company wants to hire someone who is self-assured and can perform, not someone who lacks self-worth and seems doubtful of his/her own abilities. Be confident in yourself. Check out the article I just wrote on [How To Increase Self-Confidence](#) to build up your self-confidence.

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17. **Be positive.** During the interview, always be positive and focus on the good things, not the bad things. Do not ever badmouth anyone or complain about anything because it comes across as very unprofessional. What you share in the interview is going into the evaluation of how well you fit the company. Whenever you think about saying something negative, quickly flip it around in your head and talk about the upsides instead.

18. **Be truthful.** Be true to your integrity with all your answers. Don't try to overexaggerate your contributions or falsify them. When you tell the truth, you don't need to be worrying about what you said before. Also, be honest about what you feel is the minimum pay you are willing to accept as well as your starting date. Don't tell them an answer which do not convey what you really feel. There is no need to lie just to secure a job.

19. **Be enthusiastic.** Let your enthusiasm and passion flow through with your answers. 😊 The most important indicator of how well a person will perform in his/her job is his level of passion. I just had a phone interview last week where I was shortlisted for the next round immediately at the end of the interview. The interviewer said she could feel my passion surging through from just talking on the phone! If you exude enthusiasm, the energy will flow through to your interviewers as well.

20. **Think before you speak.** For every question that they ask you, think about your answers for 2-3 seconds in your mind before you speak. This is going to be better than if you jump straight into the answer in a fluster and go off a completely wrong tangent. Structure the key points mentally then convey them one by one in your answer.

21. **Be conscious of your body language.** Convey confidence in your body language – have a good posture, shoulders back, don't go overboard with your hand gestures. I tend to lean forward a little when listening or talking – it helps to convey my interest and engagement in the conversation.

22. **Don't speak too fast.** I normally speak very fast, and I have a tendency to [speak even faster when I'm excited](#) (e.g., in a job interview). This makes it hard for the interviewers to capture what you are saying! Be conscious of your rate of speech – again, practice this before the interview (Tip #10).

23. **Win them over with your answers.** For every question the interviewers ask, they are looking for something in your answers which will make you a good fit for the company. Be aware of what that might be and include that in your answers. Be sure that your answers clearly highlight your key strengths and what you have to offer. Everything you say should ladder up to support a key

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message. Don't ramble about unrelated details. Help your interviewers out by making it easy for them to recognize you for the excellent candidate you are, rather than making them probe for it.

24. **Smile regularly.** Remember to smile from time to time! Be amiable and approachable. Don't be look too serious because it might alienate people. Apart from hiring competent people, interviewers also look to hire people they like.
25. **Take a notebook into the job interview.** This depends on the style of your interview and who your interviewers are. For some, it's okay to take a notebook inside which you can refer to or jot down notes during the interviews you want. If you are someone who gets easily nervous and forgets stuff, this will be a good tool to have.
26. **Be conscious of your interviewers.** Be conscious of how they are feeling through their facial expressions and body language. If you have been going on and on in an answer and they look like they are getting restless, speed up to the main crux of what you are going to say. In an interview, your ability to 'listen' is as important as your ability to speak.
27. **Ask smart questions at the end of the job interview.** Typically at the end of the job interview, your interviewers will ask you if you have any questions. Asking questions which express your interest in the job, such as details of the projects you will be handling if you have the role, lets them know your sincerity in the role. Asking questions about the interviewers, such as how they came to join this company, their most challenging assignment in the company, what they feel about their experience there, etc, is a great way for you to build a personal connection and to get more valuable insights about the company too.
28. **Inquire on how long it will take for them to get back to you.** This helps to manage your expectations in your waiting time. It's important since you are likely to be interviewing with other companies at the same time and receiving other offers too. If it stretches beyond their stipulated time, then most likely you did not get shortlisted.
29. **Follow-up with an email.** After the job interview, follow-up with a quick thank you email for their time. Briefly touch on about your strong interest for the company and the assignment. This helps put you in their top of mind awareness.
30. **Learn from the interview.** Regardless of what happens during the interview, be sure to learn from it afterward. Which questions stumped you? Which answers do you think can be improved upon? Identify them and work on them for your own learning purposes.

After Your Job Interview

Sometimes, just because you think you blew a job interview, doesn't mean it's completely out of the water.

When I was getting interviewed for my internship in a Fortune 100 company in 2005 (almost 4 years ago), I thought I totally ruined my chances during the 2nd round. As someone who was really spontaneous and enthusiastic at that time (I still am actually, if not more), I made two of the worst boo-boos possible during the interview.

The first one occurred just before the job interview started. I had two interviewers, a man and a lady. When I was sitting, their colleague entered the room with drinks for them. The male interviewer, seeing I had no drinks, asked me out of courtesy if I wanted one. Instead of saying no, I quipped said "Okay, yes please!"!

All the three employees must had been taken aback, because they looked at each other for a few seconds, after which the lady (who bought the drink) said she had to walk 10 minutes away to get the drinks (the interview was held in a school campus and there were no shops nearby). There was some awkward silence before the male interviewer said I could have his drink, which he then passed to me. Upon realizing what I had just done, I left the drink untouched for the whole interview.

The second one happened during the end the interview, when they asked me if I had anything to inquire. One of the questions I asked was: "When did you join the company, and how long have you been here?". The male interviewer started talking about how he studied for his PhD for 4 years, after which he went to work in the company for over 6 years. Since he looked relatively young, this prompted me to interrupt and ask him how old he was! There was another awkward silence in the room before the interviewer eventually shared his age (34).

I totally thought the interview was a goner afterward. As a neurotic [perfectionist](#) in the past, I really beat myself up over it.

Eventually though, I was shortlisted for the third round, after which I was selected for the coveted internship and subsequently offered a permanent placement in the company. In a twist of fate, the male interviewer was my manager during my internship and he became my mentor afterwards.

So, keep your chin up and be positive regardless what happens! 😊 Even if you didn't get shortlisted for the next round or for the role, all it means is you are not a right fit for the position at the moment. Don't take it as an assessment of your competency or your worth, because it isn't. To quote Alexander Graham Bell, "When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us." There is always a reason why everything happens – if you

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don't get this particular job, then it means you will get a better job elsewhere 😊 What's most important is you learn from what happened (tip #30) and put the learnings to good use next time 😊

Original Article Link: <http://celestinechua.com/blog/2009/05/30-tips-to-rule-your-job-interview/>

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Boost Your Productivity in 50 Ways

Looking for ways to increase your [productivity](#)? Do more things in a faster manner, and with better output? Here's a list of my recommended strategies and tips to increase your productivity. Each of them has its own set of contexts where it works the best in, so apply them accordingly:

1. **Get a headstart:** [Wake up early](#) – Start off your day ahead of others. When doing your tasks, start it 5 or 10 minutes earlier than the time you specify. Because you are an extra step ahead, you will feel especially good about it and be motivated to run fast to keep your lead.
2. [Get the big rocks in](#): Big rocks are your [quadrant 2](#) tasks – the important but non-urgent tasks. When big rocks are in place, you can easily get the small rocks, gravel, sand and water into the jar. Much easier than if you tried to do it the other way round, isn't it?
3. **Hardest task first:** Within your quadrant 2 tasks, work on the most hardest one when you [wake up in the morning](#). With that out of the way, everything else becomes a breeze.
4. **Single-task:** If you are doing something which requires a high level of brain work, focus on doing it one at a time. Don't try to multi-task and get nothing done in the process. For example, when I'm writing articles, I will focus solely on writing articles, since it requires thinking.
5. **Multi-task:** For the lower level, menial work which do not require much brain work. For example, if you are ironing your clothes, you can fit in other tasks, such as listening to podcasts.
6. [Time boxing](#): Set aside a fixed time slot to work on your tasks. You must work on that task and only that task during that time slot, no more, no less. (Hence the term, time 'box', since the task is boxed within the time). Most people set aside a time to work

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on a task and continue working on it till they are done, even if it means exceeding the time. Because of that, they develop the mentality that it's okay not to finish a task within the allotted time slot since there's time later to do it. This decreases their productivity. With time boxing, the non-negotiable cut-off timing makes you more productive.

7. **Effective->Efficient:** Be effective first, then be efficient. Effectiveness refers to doing the tasks that matter. Efficient means delivering higher output in lesser time. There's no point in being efficient doing the non-value added tasks. Read more: [Be the Master of Your Time](#).
8. **Productivity tools:** There are tools, both software and hardware, which help us become more productive and you should wholly leverage on them. For example, I bought the Nokia E63 Qwerty phone so I can type articles and check emails even while on the go, since I commute a lot for coaching and meet-ups with people. It has dramatically increased my productivity after that. I also use [Evernote](#) and [Sticky Notes](#) as a quick way to dump and access information. [Gcal](#) is my central calendar and gmail is my holy grail for emails. There's even [mindmapping software](#) to make [brainstorming](#) easier! Here's a list of [my favorite freewares](#), with more than half of them being productivity tools. Some examples of hardware which improve productivity are PDAs (personal organizers), 3G handphones (check emails, get connected), laptops (to work on the go) and mp3 players (for listening to news/radio/podcasts).
9. **Exercise.** The 4 cores of our lives – Mind, Body, Heart and Soul are connected. When your body is in tip condition, the other areas improve too. It's no coincidence that the times when I exercise (more often) are also the times when I'm more productive. Exercise is also a form of meditation (see next).
10. **Meditate.** It clears the mind, calms the soul, brings your awareness to your priorities and helps you to focus on whatever you are doing later on. I just returned from my [Vipassana meditation retreat](#) and I'm already feeling a big boost in momentum.
11. **Create your Life Handbook.** An idea I started in 2007, a life handbook like a life manual where you store your purpose, long-term goals, short-term goals, strategies, plans, and many other information on how to live your best life. It gets your priorities in order and keeps you focused.

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12. **Plan your day the night before:** Before you sleep, spend 5 quick minutes to plan the next day. List down all the things you want to get done, order them in priority and allocate a rough timing. This way, you can get right down to action when you wake up the next day.
13. **Use a to-list.** To-do list lets you (1) Capture all tasks that are streaming in. Firefighting activities will always be coming in endlessly, so put them off unless they are both urgent and important. This way, you can concentrate on your task at hand rather than be distracted by other incoming things. (2) It gives you immediate clarity on all the things you need to do and pace yourself accordingly (3) Not run the risk of forgetting anything you need to do. Bonus: Using check boxes in your to-do list gives you the satisfaction of ticking against the item when you are done with it.
14. **Brain dump.** You may find some thoughts distracting you while you are working on something. Empty out all these thoughts, concerns and worries in your mind into somewhere, whether a document or some paper. After you pen them down, you can focus on your task at hand and deal with those things at a later time.
15. **Be organized.** Having everything in an organized fashion makes it easier to do your work. Have a good filing system for your documents (both the soft copy and hard copy) so you can retrieve whatever you want easily.
16. **Ditch the unimportant.** If the work is a nice-to-do task and isn't a need-to-do task, consider removing it altogether. Why waste your time doing something that's not important? I'm constantly evaluating things I do to make sure they absolutely need to be done.
17. **Delegate.** If the work is something that needs to be done but (1) can be better done by someone else (2) isn't part of your scope of work or (3) isn't the best use of your time, delegate it out to the relevant people. Striving to get the maximum out of the time you have involves taking out items which aren't effective uses of your time, such as administrative work.
18. **Outsource.** Same as Delegate, except you pay someone to do it. With the internet being ubiquitous, you can easily hire someone from the developing countries to do work at a very low price. You can also get professional work done, such as design, photography, etc at a reasonable price. Try [Odesk](#), [Go Free Lance](#) and [Elance](#).

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19. **Cut out your distractions.** Distractions exist all around us – MSN, Facebook, Twitter, TV, Radio, your handphone, external noise, etc. Remove all of them before you get to work. I used to do my work and MSN at the same time, then realized that I didn't get anything concrete done during the period. Now I just cut it out totally. If you want an ultimate no-distraction period, remove internet access altogether. You will naturally start doing your work in due time with the other modes of distractions are removed.

20. **Keep your emails in check.** Emails are supposed to make things more effective, not bog you down. Make sure you are managing your emails well – Check out 9 Easy Steps To [Effective Email Management](#).

21. **Practice 80/20 rule.** 80/20 rule refers to the phenomenon where 20% of causes lead to 80% of the results. [Quit trying to be a perfectionist](#) and focus on the 20% of the things that matter. Read my 3-part series on [80/20 Principle](#) for more on 80/20 rule and how to implement it in your life.

22. **Master your skills.** To get your work done well and fast, you need to first master your skills. In gaming terms, [level up](#). For example if you are a photographer, you can't be getting ahead on your photography work if you haven't gotten acquainted with the functions of your camera and your graphic software. Read: [Skills Development](#).

23. **Productivity periods.** All of us have times when we are more productive. For me, it's early morning and late at night. Identify these times and schedule the toughest work to be done during then. For the other times, just slot in the menial work or just relax.

24. **Peak enjoyment.** Find the most enjoyable manner to get things done and you will get more work done than using any other method. For example, I get more workout done when I'm enjoying the sport (frisbee/badminton) than when I do something less enjoyable (say, working out at the gym).

25. **Just do it.** Stop finding excuses and just do it. Within 5 minutes into the task, the momentum will start to flow.

26. **Be well rested.** A good sleep perks me up for whatever is next. Note that quality of sleep is the key, not quantity. Before you sleep, try journaling or meditation to clear the clutter in your mind so you can sleep better later.

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27. **Learn from the best.** Identify the people who are the best in what you are trying to do. Learn from them, understand the best practices they adopt and model their behaviors. This cuts short your learning curve by a big chunk.
28. **Search and reapply.** Look at the best practices from other places. Apply them to what you are doing now. Many best practices can actually be cross-applied to different places, also known as the [Medici-Effect](#).
29. **Improvise.** Set a target. Track your performance. If you fall short of your expectations, evaluate how you can improve next time. If you meet your target, see how you can perform even better next time.
30. **Read productivity materials.** Good productivity books include David Allen's [Getting Things Done](#) and Timothy Ferriss' [Four Hour Work Week](#). Productivity blogs you can check out are [Life Hacker](#), [Life Hack](#) and [Getting Things Done](#). Just bear in mind not to get too caught up with life hacks and miss the bigger picture of what you are trying to do.
31. **Bundle similar tasks.** Put the same tasks together to get synergy out of them. For example, if you need to buy groceries from the supermarket, work out the other things you need to get from the mart so you can purchase them all at a go. If you need to work on Project A, finish everything related to Project A in the same session rather than scattering them throughout the day.
32. **Use the best tools.** The tools you use are supposed to make you faster, not slower. Upgrade to the latest versions of software (Lotus Notes, Outlook, Photoshop, MS Office, etc). Use a computer with an optimal processor speed. Make sure your internet connection is not slowing you down.
33. **Reward yourself.** An incentive will perk things up. Tie whatever you do with a nice reward at the end. Besides the sweet feeling of completion, now you have something else to motivate yourself to work faster.
34. **Do things you love.** Do only the things which you want to do, not things you don't want to do. During the last few months of my corporate employment when I lost my passion in my job, getting through work became a dread. Compared to now as I'm doing what I really love, I totally look forward to doing this every time, without fail! 😊

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35. **Learn to say 'No'**. If you want to get things done, this means standing up for yourself and saying no to other things. Things you don't want to do, things which are unimportant, and things which are unrelated. You will never make progress in what you want to do if you keep saying yes all the time.
36. **[Quit to win](#)**. Sometimes, if things we are doing are heading nowhere, it's time to just cut it off on the spot. There's no point in finishing something for the sake of finishing them – it defeats the purpose.
37. **Time out**. If your brain is completely fried or if you are physically too tired, give yourself a time out. No point pushing yourself onward and moving millimeters forward when you can give yourself a good rest and boost yourself after that. If you are stressed, here's [55 Tips To Manage Work Stress](#).
38. **Create a conducive environment**. Your work environment plays an important role in your attitude towards your work. Make sure you are working in a personal space that motivates you. My bedroom is also my office and I have set it up to be an inspirational environment. Read more: [Does Your Room Inspire You?](#)
39. **[Improve your posture](#)**. Your posture affects your productivity too. Get into a good posture and your attention span and productivity on your work will increase too.
40. **Delete limiting thoughts**. Worrying about some hypothetical scenario that has not occurred yet? Thinking negative thoughts? Feeling negative feelings? Stop living in your bubble and trash these all out with the [\[Delete\] button](#). You don't need all these things to hold you back.
41. **Cut down on commuting time**. Commuting time is probably the one thing that eats up people's time. Cut down on your commute by taking shorter routes, taking a cab, hitching a ride in someone's car, working from home, using a car pool, etc. If you can't, then leverage on productivity tools (see tip #8) to make the best of your traveling time.
42. **[Be on time](#)**. Be on time for everything on your schedule. This minimizes possibility that your tasks slide off the schedule and affect other things later on.

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43. **Set a target.** A target or [a goal](#) gives you something to work towards. Better still, make it a challenge that is still achievable at the same time.
44. **Set a deadline.** Put a deadline to the goal you set (Tip #43). A deadline creates speed and action.
45. [Plan your task](#). A blueprint is needed to build a building. Similarly, a good plan facilitates your work by quantum leaps.
46. **Visualization.** Imagine you have finished the task. Feel that surge of euphoria. Now, ride on that wave of energy and use that to move your tasks into completion.
47. [Quit caffeine](#). Have a mentally clear mind by staying off caffeine.
48. **Keep doing.** It's said that it takes 10,000 hours to become a master at what you do. Make sure you put in the due diligence in your work.
49. **Use overwhelming force:** Blast all your energy and get the task nailed down, rather than try to tackle the task with little spurts of energy. If you imagine you have a report which takes 3 hours to finish, channeling all your energy to get it done in one sitting is better than the alternative where you do it for 30 minutes every day, each time having to recollect where you left off previously.
50. **Get a coach.** A coach brings your awareness to your [blind spots](#), pushes you forward and opens you up to new levels of performance you never thought of.

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25 Brainstorming Techniques

Caught with a problem you cannot solve? Need new ideas and solutions? The process of brainstorming requires you to think out of the box that is keeping you in the problem.

The idea for this post was triggered by a question from a reader, who asked me on my thoughts of the best brainstorming methods to achieve the best results. Because brainstorming is applicable to all kinds of contexts and there is no one size fits all method, I thought it'll be more helpful to write a post on the different possible types of brainstorming techniques we can use instead.

Here is a list of 25 brainstorming techniques you can use to get out of the situation you are in! From this list, you can assess what's the best method for the issue you are facing and apply it accordingly. 😊

1. **Time Travel.** How would you deal with this if you were in a different time period? 10 years ago? 100 years ago? 1,000 years ago? 10,000 years ago? How about in the future? 10 years later? 100 years later? 1,000 years later? 10,000 years later?
2. **Teleportation:** What if you were facing this problem in a different place? Different country? Different geographic region? Different universe? Different plane of existence? How would you handle it?
3. **Attribute change.** How would you think about this if you were a different gender? Age? Race? Intellect? Height? Weight? Nationality? Your Sanity? With each attribute change, you become exposed to a new spectrum of thinking you were subconsciously closed off from.
4. **Rolestorming.** What would you do if you were someone else? Your parent? Your teacher? Your manager? Your partner? Your best friend? Your enemy? Etc?

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5. **Iconic Figures.** This is a spinoff of rolestorming. What if you were an iconic figure of the past? Buddha? Jesus? Krishna? Albert Einstein? Thomas Edison? Mother Theresa? Princess Diana? Winston Churchill? Adolf Hitler? How about the present? Barack Obama? Steve Jobs? Bill Gates? Warren Buffet? Steven Spielberg? Etc? How would you think about your situation?
6. **Superpowers.** This is another spinoff of rolestorming. What if you suddenly have superpowers? Superman? Spiderman? Wonderwoman? X-Men? The Hulk? One of the Fantastic Four? What would you do?
7. **Gap Filling.** Identify your current spot – Point A – and your end goal – Point B. What is the gap that exists between A and B? What are all the things you need to fill up this gap? List them down and find out what it takes to get them.
8. **Group Ideation.** Have a group brainstorming session! Get a group of people and start ideating together. More brains are better than one! Let the creative juices flow together!
9. **Mind Map.** Great tool to work out as many ideas as you can in hierarchical tree and cluster format. Start off with your goal in the center, branch out into the major sub-topics, continue to branch out into as many sub-sub-topics as needed
10. **Medici Effect.** [Medici Effect](#) refers to how ideas in seemingly unrelated topics/fields intersect. Put your goal alongside similar goals in different areas/contexts and identify parallel themes/solutions. For example, if your goal is to be an award winning artist, look at award winning musicians, educators, game developers, computer makers, businessmen, etc. Are there any commonalities that lie among all of them that you can apply to your situation? What worked for each of them that you can adopt?
11. **SWOT Analysis.** Do a SWOT of your situation – What are the Strengths? Weaknesses? Opportunities? Threats? The analysis will open you up to ideas you may not be aware before.
12. **Brain Writing.** Get a group of people and have them write their ideas on their own sheet of paper. After 10 minutes, rotate the sheets to different people and build off what the others wrote on their paper. Continue until everyone has written on everyone else's sheet.

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13. **Trigger Method.** Brainstorm on as many ideas as possible. Then select the best ones and brainstorm on those ideas as 'triggers' for more ideas. Repeat until you find the best solution.
14. **Variable Brainstorming.** First, identify the variable in the end outcome you look to achieve. For example, if your goal is to achieve X visitors to your website, the variable is # of visitors. Second, list down all the possibilities for that variable. Different variations of visitors are gender/age/race/nationality/occupation/interests/etc. Think about the question with each different variable. For example, for Genre: How can you get more females to your website? How can you get more males to your website? For age: How can you get more teenagers to your website? How can you get more adults to your website? And so on.
15. **Niche.** This is the next level of variable brainstorming method. From the variations of the variable you have listed, mix and match them in different ways and brainstorm against those niches. For example, using the example in #14, how can you get more male teenagers to your website? (Gender & Age) How can you get more American female adults to your website? (Nationality, Gender & Age)
16. **Challenger.** List down all the assumptions in your situation and challenge them. For example, your goal is to brainstorm on a list of ideas for your romance novel which you want to get published. There are several assumptions you are operating in here.
#1: Genre to write: Romance. Why must it be that romance? Can it be a different genre? Another assumption is for a novel.
#2: Length of the story: Novel. Why must it be a novel? Can it be a short story? A series of books? #3: Medium: Book. Why must be it a book? Can it be an ebook? Mp3? Video? And so on.
17. **Escape Thinking.** This is a variation of Challenger method. Look at the assumptions behind the goal you are trying to achieve, then flip that assumption around and look at your goal from that new angle. For example, you want to earn more income from selling books. Your assumption may be 'People buy books for themselves'. Flip the assumption around such that 'People do NOT buy books for reading'. What will this lead to? You may end up with people buy books as gifts, for collection purposes, etc. Another assumption may be 'People read books'. The flip side of this assumption may be people look at books (drawings). Escaping from these assumptions will bring you to a different realm of thought on how to achieve your goal.
18. **Reverse Thinking.** Think about what everyone will typically do in your situation. Then do the opposite.

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19. **Counteraction Busting.** What counteracting forces are you facing in your scenario? For example, if you want to increase traffic to your website, two counteracting forces may be the number of ads you put and the page views of your site. The more ads you put, the more users will likely be annoyed and surf away. What can you do such that the counteraction no longer exists or the counteraction is no longer an issue? Some solutions may be 1) Get ads that are closely related to the theme of your site 2) Get contextual ads that are part of your content rather than separate, and so on.

20. **Resource Availability.** What if money, time, people, supplies are not issues at all? What if you can ask for whatever you want and have it happen? What will you do?

21. **Drivers Analysis.** What are the forces that help drive you forward in your situation? What are the forces that are acting against you? Think about how you can magnify the former and reduce/eliminate the latter.

22. **Exaggeration.** Exaggerate your goal and see how you will deal with it now. **Enlarge it:** What if it is 10 times its current size? 100 times? 1000 times? **Shrink it:** What if it is 1/10 its current size? 1/100? 1/1000? **Multiply it:** What if you have 10 of these goals now? 100? 1000?

23. **Get Random Input.** Get a random stimuli and try to see how you can fit it into your situation. Get a random word/image from a dictionary/webpage/book/magazine/newspaper/TV/etc, a random object from your room/house/workplace/neighborhood/etc and so on.

24. **Meditation.** Focus on your key question such as 'How can I solve XX problem?' or 'How can I achieve XX goal?' and meditate on it in a quiet place. Have a pen and paper in front of you so you can write immediately whatever comes to mind. Do this for 30 minutes or as long as it takes.

25. **Write a list of 101 ideas.** Open your word processor and write a laundry list of at least 101 ideas to deal with your situation. Go wild and write whatever you can think of without restricting yourself. Do not stop until you have at least 101.

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55 Tips to Overcome Work Stress

Work stress exists no matter which line of work, industry or company you are at. Here are 55 tips which can help you manage it better 😊 . I personally applied almost all of the tips below when I was working at my previous job, which was highly demanding and challenging – including tip #55, [though it definitely wasn't due to stress!](#) 😊

1. **Be clear on your career objective.** What are you planning to achieve out of all of this? Is it in line with [your purpose in life](#)? This is what keeps you going every day.
2. [Go to work early](#) every day. Have a head start.
3. [Put first things first](#). Be clear on your Quadrant 2 tasks.
4. **Have a to-do list** on hand with the tasks you need to finish.
5. **Refer to the list** throughout the day to ensure you are on the right track.
6. **Jot down all other tasks** that comes to you in a notebook. Deal with them when you are free.
7. **Do not skip lunch.** It is not good for you. Besides, you can't deal with your work effectively if you don't have energy.
8. **Do not eat lunch at your desk.** Get out for some fresh air.
9. **Lunch out with co-workers.** An excellent time to destress.

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10. **Cultivate meaningful relationships** with your co-workers.
11. **Be helpful to your co-workers.** You will feel good for giving.
12. **Get a mentor** in your company or elsewhere. He/she is more experienced and can dispense valuable advice.
13. **Be a mentor to someone at work.** Helping someone with their problems gives you new insight to yours.
14. **Be clear on your boss' expectations of you.** Discuss/review your work plan regularly.
15. **Be on top of your deliverables.**
16. **Develop a genuine friendship with your boss.**
17. **Talk to someone about your problems.** Do not keep them bottled up inside.
18. **Be on time** for meetings/discussions/appointments.
19. **Come prepared** for meetings/discussions/appointments.
20. **Anticipate potential issues.**
21. **Prepare contingency plans** for those issues.
22. **Think opportunities**, not problems.

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23. **Be big picture focused.** Look at long-term vs short-term.
24. Gain additional perspective by **looking at your situation from another person's shoes.**
25. **[Adopt the 80/20 principle.](#)** Do not fuss over the less important 20%. Check out the 3-part series on [The 80/20 principle](#) which covers what the 80/20 principle is, why it's so crucial and how we can apply it.
26. **Focus on what is actionable** in a situation.
27. **Delegate work** where possible.
28. **Learn to say no** if a task is not a priority.
29. **Move on** if there is nothing you can do.
30. **Leverage** on your co-workers' expertise and knowledge.
31. **Escalate problems** to your boss when they are beyond you.
32. **Identify sources of your stress** and work a **solution.**
33. **Reward yourself** when you accomplish something.
34. **Establish a social network at your workplace.**
35. **Maintain your social circle outside of work.** Your life does not revolve around work.

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36. **Breathe** deeply and calmly all the time.
37. Develop a [good posture](#). It makes you look better, lets you think better and prevents back pain in the future. Check out the article on [Benefits Of Having A Good Posture \(And 13 Tips To Getting One\)](#).
38. [Meditate](#) daily to clear out mental clutter.
39. **Listen to your favorite music** as you work (using earphones of course).
40. **Exercise**. Set aside a regular time every week for it.
41. **Make your desk conducive for your work**. Have an organizing system, put personal photographs, remove unwanted clutter, etc.
42. **Take a break** from your computer every once in a while. Go to the toilet, go to the pantry, etc.
43. **Get a fruit to snack on** when you are hungry.
44. **Have a water bottle/mug** by your side. Many working adults don't drink enough water every day.
45. **Look ahead at your daily/weekly schedule** to know what is next.
46. [Be the master of your time](#). Check out [the Podcast here](#).
47. **Make a commitment to leave work on time**.
48. **Do what is needed for today and leave the rest for tomorrow**. Work will always be there.

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49. **Get enough sleep every day.** Aim for minimum 6 hours. It will go a long way the next day.
50. **Rest if you are sick.** You are not superman, and even superman has down times.
51. **Do not overcommit** your resources.
52. When the going gets tough, remember **all this is part of the job** - you are getting paid to do this.
53. **Focus on what you love** about your job.
54. **Unwind** after a day of hard work. Take time out for a **vacation**.
55. **Quit your job.** If all previous 54 tips don't work and your work is simply too much for you, quit it. There is no point in leading a life of misery.

Bonus tips!

1. Do things **one at a time**. At Michael Jordan puts it "*Step by step*, I cant see any other way of accomplishing anything".
2. **Detach** yourself from the situation. People become stressed and anxious because they attach themselves to the issue and the outcome. Recognize that these are separate from you and view them objectively.
3. **Do your best** and the rest will follow.
4. **Shift your locus of control inward**. Do you normally blame the external environment for what happens, or do you take responsibility? When you assume control of whatever happens, even if it may seem it is not within your control, you will become much more equipped to handle what occur.

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Passion or Money?

Hi Celes, I find myself in a passionless career but unable to pursue my true goals for fear of financial stability. What makes it even harder is that mine is a great job that many strive for. A classic case of the 'golden handcuffs' if you will. So can you give me any advice here? How can one both earn enough to be happy while pursuing less than lucrative ambitions? – Serge

Hi Serge, thanks for your question 😊 Your situation is the epitome of the classic dilemma that many face today in our society. Many of us face at this question at a certain point in our lives – including the people around me and myself. I was personally confronted with it 3 years ago when I graduated from Business School, where I was caught between a promising brand management career or my life passion to help people grow and achieve their highest potential. In this article, I will share with you how I came to find my best solution to this conundrum.

Before we even discuss further, let us first assess the situation.

Assessing the situation

Scenario A: Passion, with little money

Let's look at **Scenario A, where you pursue your passion which is not so lucrative**. While you love every minute of pursuing your passion and you get so much fulfillment out of it, you find it hard to concentrate on this path when you have to face real, monetary limitations. Money to pay the bills, money to do other things you love, money to live in a sufficient manner. This is the scenario of the starving artist, if you may.

Scenario B: Money, with no passion

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Then there's **Scenario B**, where you remain in your lucrative job with great prospects, but you do not hold a passion for the work. You get by working from day to day by blocking out your real inner desires. [The numbness you feel](#) is drowned out by the extrinsic benefits that your job offers, such as an attractive benefits package which allows you to acquire material goods and live in luxury, prestige and awe that comes from being associated with the company, etc. However, these are temporal gratifications and [you feel empty inside in the long run](#).

What should we do here? Both options have its own sets of pros and cons. Both options leave us unsatisfied in some manner. Scenario A lets us be fulfilled emotionally, but not in terms of material needs. Scenario B lets us be fulfilled on the material level, but not emotionally.

The answer is: It's not an either or situation; it's 'and'. There is a **Scenario C** where we can meet our all our needs. 😊

So if the scenario exists, how do we get there? How do we achieve it?

Don't limit yourself

The reason why people commonly narrow it down to between passion or money is because of what they see around them. If we are to look towards the world for outlets which meets our passion and needs, we will find sub-optimal solutions. Such as a teaching job that pays little. Non-profit organizations laden with bureaucracy and poor practices that lead to our mental atrophy. Nearly non-existent paths for passions like art and music. The bleakness of the situation is further emphasized by real life examples, such as artists who experience dwindling sales for their galleries, musicians who work hard on their music career with limited success, etc.

Don't limit yourself by what you see in this world. And don't limit yourself by what people around you say or think either, be it your mentors, teachers, family, friends, peers, or whoever. I'm not saying not to listen to them; but rather, not to restrict yourself based on what others tell you. You are an individual with your own unique set of needs. If you are to relegate it to the real world to provide you with the outlet to meet all your needs, you are not going to find fully satisfactory answers. The real world is only going to have opportunities that reflect others' needs and can meet your needs in a certain manner. **Your own needs can only be fully met by creating your own opportunities.**

Your options are only as limited as you let them be. If you feel your passion is less than lucrative than your day job, it is because you define it to be that way. If your passion is not a viable full time career, it is because you choose it to be so. If your passion cannot meet your material needs, it is because you think it to be so.

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Let the **visionary extraordinaire** hidden inside of you emerge and go wild. Deep down, there is a side of you hidden that you have not unleashed yet – the side who is fully capable of creating your that vision and ideal of what you want to achieve, then setting out to create it in the physical reality. You know that yourself, don't you? 😊

Be aware of your needs

Start off by becoming aware of all your needs that you have. While it is common to consider just passion and money, we have needs beyond those two segments we should factor in.

There are **4 key aspects** that comprise us as humans: **Mind, Heart, Body, Soul**. For each of these aspects, it has its own set of needs that need to be met for us to live the fullest life we desire.

Do this exercise now and ask yourself these questions:

- **Mind:**
 - **What are your mental needs?** This includes to learn and grow, to exercise your creativity, to stimulate your thinking, etc. What kind of skills and abilities do you want to nurture?

- **Body:**
 - **What are your physical needs?** Such as basic physiological needs, such as food, water, shelter, sleep, etc. It also includes what's needed for you to live in a manner that is satisfactory and comfortable to you, such your disposable income, material needs, etc.
 - **What are your health needs?** What do you need to do to keep your body in top condition? What do you need to do to stay healthy? This includes exercise and your diet.

- **Heart:**

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- **What is your passion?** What drives you onward in life every day, without fail?
- **What are your love and belongingness needs?** This includes relationships with family, friends, a partner/spouse.
- **What are your esteem needs?** Examples include desire for achievement, respect by others, self-esteem, and so on.
- **Soul:**
 - **What are your spiritual needs?** What is the spiritual awareness do you wish to attain? What is the level of spirituality you wish to attain?
 - **What are your obligations and responsibilities?** Such as responsibilities to your parents, family, society, country, etc. It may be to support your family, to contribute and give back to the society, etc.

For your answers,

- 1) **Write what is true to you.** Don't write down what others feel you should do but isn't true for yourself. For example, others might feel it is their obligation as a citizen to give back 10% of their earnings to the society. However, if you honestly disagree with this, it is not a need for you.
- 2) **Write only the absolute needs.** These are the make or break factors which let you lead the most fulfilling manner. If one doesn't exist, you will not be completely happy. If earning \$100,000 a month is really what you need to make you 100% happy, then write it down. Likewise, if just earning \$1,000 is sufficient to beam you up everyday, then put that down.
- 3) **Don't restrict yourself with your situation in life.** Don't worry about whether something is possible, realistic or logical. Just imagine this as your anything-goes menu where you can order anything you want from the universe.

Be your life's architect: Design your vision

Now, based on all the needs you have, **design your vision; your dream life. Assume the role of your life's architect** and design the scenario where all your needs will be met. Ask yourself this question – *If the universe can give you absolutely anything you want, what is the perfect life you want to be leading right now?* This is your end goal that you want to reach. This is the path which meets all your needs, from mind, body, heart and soul. This is the vision which will spur you on and empower you endlessly 😊 .

Be as liberal as needed. Write down whatever your vision entails. It may involve starting your own business, migrating to another country, buying a cottage in the countryside, whatever. You can even have your own TV show like Oprah if you want. Or run your own empire like Donald Trump. The key is, don't limit yourself. If you find your ever-logical left brain intervening and commenting "*Oh, but this isn't going to be realistic..*" or "*I don't think this is possible...*", tell him/her "*Thank you for your opinion, but this is an exercise for our creative right brain*". Keep doing that and eventually he/she will eventually get the idea and quietly watch you work.

When you are done, look at this scenario and ask yourself the determining question – **Will you be 100% happy here? Does it meet every single one of your needs?** If not, there is either something you missed out when listing your needs for each aspect, or you designed a vision which missed out a particular need. Identify what that missing piece is and improvise on your vision until it is a scenario where you are 100% happy.

Building your path to your dream

When you have finished designing your vision, look at your current situation. Where do you stand now? What is needed for you to reach the end point? **What are the barriers that are preventing you from getting to your destination?** Maybe you don't let the skillsets and know-how to achieve the end goal. Maybe you are not quite sure how to reach there. Maybe you don't have enough money to start-up the kind of business you want. Write all of these down.

Start identifying how you can address the barriers. If you don't have the skillsets, then figure how you can learn them. It can be through self reading, attending training courses, getting a personal coach, etc. If you are not sure how to reach there, look towards people who have reached similar goals. Study what they did and learn from them. Talk to them to understand more about their initial predicaments and their actions in those scenarios. If you don't have enough money yet, then make earning money your temporary focus until you are able to move on to the next step.

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All in all, build up your full plan to transit to your end goal. Identify you need to do in order to get from where you are right now, point A, to your end vision, point B. I've written about this in '[Living in Alignment with Your Purpose](#)' on how to bridge your current life with your end vision. Check out the [Goal Achievement series](#) (7-part) which talks about a 5-step framework where you build your path towards your goals and conquer them.

How I came to architect my life

At my point of graduation from Business School 3 years ago, I discovered my fervent passion towards helping people grow. However during that time, I had already accepted the offer of a brand management career at a Fortune 100 company. It was a dilemma since I was a marketing major and that job was the dream job of every marketer. The pay was gratuitous at approximately 50% higher than the average graduate pay. There were also extremely great development prospects that came with the job. The company was extremely prestigious and reputable; it was well-known as the choice employer anywhere around the world. It was undoubtedly an outstanding offer.

After much contemplation, I decided it was best to stay on in the career for a few years first. After all, it was a highly dynamic and intensive job and would serve as an excellent platform for me to develop and grow myself before I finally pursue my passion later on.

During the course of my career, I was working towards my passion in parallel. I started exploring pre-existing outlets. Personal development was and still is at an infancy stage in Singapore, where I live. The concept of developing yourself in the context of your life is still quite alien to most people here – everyone is more focused on developing themselves in the context of others' visions, such as their employers', family's, society's, etc. Tell anyone I want to be a life coach, and they'll go 'Huh?'. If anything, people see self help as something kooky for people who have no life, neurotic or gone off the wrong end of the track.

Since there were no apparent opportunities in the area of personal development, I thought to seek out a related societal cause, since it's within the scope of helping people too. I brainstormed on local non-profit organizations with social responsibility causes which I could join. I checked out the United Nations website to look at the jobs they offer. I expanded my search to international non-profit career portals and scouted for opportunities in NGOs, social enterprises and the like. It was even to the stage where I was willing to just relocate myself overseas and devote myself to my cause.

For each opportunity I came across, I always found myself having to battle against other considerations such as 1) the pay and benefits were nowhere even close to what I was getting in my brand management job, 2) the causes of the organizations were not what I was 101% passionate about, 3) red tape and bureaucracy in the system, 4) lack of best-in-class trainings and practices where I could

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develop personally. People who have trodden on this path before would give me the same watch outs. I felt myself reaching a dead end.

That's when I finally realized that I was just boxing myself in. **Why was I trying to compromise on my own desires?** Why should I limit myself to what's out there? Why should I need to pick any of these options before me? If nobody could meet everything that I want, **I would architect my own vision and carve my own path towards it.**

I started getting down to work. I let my imagination run wild and branched my thinking into the widest, deepest ends possible. I wrote down my grandest long-term vision where I assumed I could have anything I wanted in this world. I decided that in 10-years time, I was going to have a life development school (think Xavier Institute in X-Men movie series), where students would be developed in personal development and spiritual development. Instead of limiting myself to just 1 medium, I was going to be a full-time life coach, blogger, speaker, educator, among others. I developed an overarching strategy on how to achieve these goals and started on developing my plans, week-in, week-out. Some days I would be caught up with my day job, but all-in-all I always made it a point to check back on my plans and build on it.

Eventually, there came a point where I felt I was ready to make the move. I handed in my resignation letter in Jul '08 and left my career in Oct '08 last year. Ever since then, I started working on building the pillars of my life passion. Today, I'm already living this in part, blogging here at [my blog](#), coaching many people and speaking at events. These is just the first output of my plan; there's many more things to come. While [the path will not be all smooth sailing](#), there is absolutely no doubt in me that all of this will come to fruition in due time. 😊

Take control of your life

What is the vision of your life? **As your life's architect, what will you design as your life to be?** What is the ideal where all the needs of your mind, body, heart and soul will be met? Start off by creating this end vision. When you have clarity on the actual end point, you will be able to identify what needs to be done between where you are now and your final goal to lead you there. Put aside [at least 30 minutes every day](#) working on your strategy and plans. You will find that everything else will gradually fall into place, bit by bit. In time to come, everything will come to fruition. The end vision will come true, every bit the way you imagined it, and better.

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