

DITCH YOUR DEAD-END JOB  
AND TURN YOUR **PASSION**  
INTO A **PROFESSION**

A man in a dark suit and white shirt is captured mid-air, jumping over a desk. The desk is cluttered with a rotary phone, a pen, and some papers. The entire scene is surrounded by a massive, chaotic sea of papers and documents that appear to be falling or blowing away, creating a sense of motion and transition. The background is a bright, cloudy sky.

# JUMP SHIP

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HOST OF TV'S "JUMP SHIPP" AND AWARD WINNING ENTREPRENEUR

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and Turn Your Passion  
Into a Profession



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## A PROPER INTRODUCTION

Well, hello, I'm Josh Shipp, and you and I don't have much in common.

I know it's a bit unconventional for an author to potentially alienate his readers right out of the gate, but I'm not particularly conventional. As you'll discover, that's just not me, and it's not really what matters anyway. Fact is, this isn't your typical be-your-own-boss, make-a-gazillion-dollars-and-be-superhappy-all-the-time-without-having-to-work-hard book, filled with feel-good lies and fantasies. I'm not writing this to tell you all the things you want to hear; I'm writing this to tell you what you *need* to hear if you're really serious about making a career change and truly succeeding.

I have a reputation for being "in your face, but on your side," and I make it a habit to shoot straight with people, period. Which is why I feel obligated to open this book by addressing our differences head-on.

Some of those differences, you'll likely agree, are good things. For example, you probably were not abandoned by your birth parents and raised in the foster care system. You probably weren't written off as a lost cause when you were a child, probably

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weren't obese, abused, and suicidal in junior high. You probably never spent a night in jail in high school. Furthermore, the gentlemen among you probably grew past 5' 7" and could sport facial hair if you so pleased. I, however, am often mistaken for a man-boy.

But there's at least one way we're different that you're perhaps jealous of: I'm living my dream . . . and you're probably not.

*Wow, Josh, seriously?! This book is the worst, and I hate you.* Sorry. But I didn't say that to crush your spirits. It's simply the truth: I'm living my dream. And it's a truth that I wish for you as well.

Let's face the facts here: You're reading a book about how to change careers and find your dream job. I'm guessing you know deep down that you are capable of something much more than what you're doing right now. I'm betting you look around at your life sometimes and think, *This can't possibly be all there is!* If that's where you're at, then I'm delighted you found this book. Before we're done here, the path from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be will be clear. But it will be on you to implement said clear path.

Oddly, I've never wanted to quit my job. Seriously. I started doing what I love when I was still in high school and have never looked back. I got my start as a professional speaker when I was seventeen, and I continue to speak at high schools and colleges worldwide. I host and produce documentary television shows. I train other speakers who want to reach youth audiences. And, obviously, I write books.

I'm married to an incredible Italian woman named Sarah, who gave me two children, London and Katie. London, much to his good fortune, looks a lot like Sarah. He speaks Italian and has stunning olive skin and an enormous heart. Katie, on the other hand, takes after me. She's small and pasty and spends the

majority of her time crying. The difference is that the pediatricians say she'll grow out of that since she's a baby, while they offered me no similar encouragement. I'm happy for her, and have accepted myself.

Also, in the interest of full disclosure, I just turned thirty, which makes me feel old, so I've taken to wearing cardigans and having an afternoon nap. But I'm still active. I like to run. I eat healthfully. I juice. And we live in what I consider to be the happiest place on the planet: California.

Maybe all this doesn't sound like your dream at all—your dream is bound to look different than mine, as it should. But I'm living the life I've always wanted, and there's seriously no good reason why you shouldn't do the same.

Now, some of you clever overachiever types are starting to wonder why a guy like me, who's never changed careers—and never even *wanted* to—decided to write a book about jumping ship. Your arms are crossed, your brow is furrowed, and you're asking yourself, *Could anyone be less qualified to talk about this?*

I decided to write this book because somewhere around my midtwenties, I realized I wasn't normal. Most people's stories are more like yours; somewhere around their midtwenties, they begin to suspect they're on the wrong track—and they want off. Stat.

I've seen countless friends, peers, and fellow millennials go through what you're going through—the boredom, the frustration, the hidden shame, the confusion, and the paralysis of coming to grips with the fact that they don't like where they are, what they're doing, and where they're going. I've walked step-by-step through this transition with many of them. Through all this, I started thinking a lot about what I'd done differently—how I'd ended up in such a different place than so many of my peers.

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This book is the result. Through a lot of self-reflection, I was able to reverse engineer my success story. Then things got even better. As I began to have conversations with brave people in my life who've had the guts to chuck the script other people were writing for their lives and Jump Ship to pursue their dreams, I realized I wasn't just a fluke. These brave people had all followed the same steps I had. Some started young, like I did, and others changed course somewhere along the line. In both cases, the steps we all followed to success looked remarkably similar. And so I set pen to paper to record the patented Seven-Step Blueprint for Dream-Job Fulfillment (patent pending).

Later in this book we'll get into the nitty-gritty of the seven-step process for landing your dream job, but I want to take a second up front to emphasize that this isn't just some schtick. When I sat down to map this out, I didn't know if it would be three steps or ten steps. It turned out to be seven. And these steps have come through years and years of personal experience and the stories that come from many of my successful friends. Seven isn't a magic number. The number of steps isn't the point, or ultimately that important. What's important is that the principles can be applied to your story and the stories of the people around you, and that they work.

You've probably heard the phrase "jump ship" before, right? I've used it already in this introduction. It's slang for "bailing out," which is similar to the phrase "turning tail," or—to use a now-antiquated cultural jest—"taking French leave," all of which are slang for quitting, fleeing, escaping, or abandoning the course you're on. At its most basic level, this book is about that concept.

I want to help you escape—or even avoid, should you be so lucky—the increasingly common quarter-life crisis by giving you the kick in the pants you need to make a "jump" away from



your current career path to one that makes your heart come alive. I want to help you recapture that carefree enthusiasm you might not have felt since you were a kid, back when you jumped out of trees and sprinted down hills and did flips off monkey bars without even considering that you might break an ankle.

This book wants you to identify *that* job—the dream job you want for the rest of your life—and then help you get there.

Remember all those differences between us that we were talking about earlier? I want you to set those aside for a second and hear me loud and clear: We're also very similar. I'm an imperfect human just like you. I was born with no particular advantage—no wealth, no connections. My parents left me with a name and nothing else. Not even particularly hardy genes.

If, for one second, you place me on a pedestal as if I'm on a higher level than you because I've "made it" and you haven't (yet), you're completely offtrack and you're going to miss the whole point.

Remember the old *Saturday Night Live* skit where Will Ferrell is the cowbell player in Blue Öyster Cult as they record "Don't Fear the Reaper"? If not, do a quick Google search to find and watch it. It's an *SNL* classic.

As great as Will Ferrell is, I must say my favorite character in the skit is Christopher Walken playing Bruce Dickinson, a famous producer who, in the skit, comes in every now and then to comment on the usage of the cowbell, making instantly famous such lines such as, "Guess what . . . I gotta fever, and the only prescription is more cowbell!" But my favorite moment is when he says:

*I put on my pants just like the rest of you—one leg at a time.  
Except, once my pants are on, I make gold records.*

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I want to be like Bruce Dickinson. I want to wake up every day, put on my pants, *and then go make gold records.*

And that's exactly what I set out to do every day in my life. I don't say that to impress you, but to impress upon you that *anything* I have done with my life—any success, speaking engagement, TV show, interview, book contract, new business, or partnership—all happened because I (after securing my pants) put the blood, sweat, and tears into making those goals a reality.

I didn't write this book because I'm better than you or have everything figured out. I'm a massive, chronic screwup, and I'm still on a journey of my own. I wrote this because I've learned a lot (usually the hard way) as I've pursued my dreams, and I would love nothing more than to share those lessons with you.

Of course, I put my pants on one leg at a time, just like you and everyone else. But what I choose to do next is what separates me from the millions of people who set their dream aside on an attic shelf—next to their high school varsity jackets, yearbooks, and dusty trophies—and accidentally forget about it. And, this is important: What YOU do next will determine if you are one of them or one of us.

The lessons I share in these pages involve some of the most important decisions I've ever made. I honestly believe the ideas in this book could change the course of your entire life.

If you think I'm talking about a simple career change here, I'm not. This is bigger than just your career. It's about finding what you really want to do with your life, dealing with what's holding you back, and actually going for it. This is a little thing that will change everything. Your life and the lives of those you influence.

One of my favorite quotes is by Maya Angelou. And, I admit, after being alive on this planet for over three decades filled with

both amazing and painful memories, I can wholeheartedly agree with her when she says:

*There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.*

Does reading that make your heart hurt a tad? I know it does mine because I am still, with everything that I am, continuing on the journey of telling my story. In fact, writing this book is part of that story for me, and I hope reading it can become part of your story. If that quote makes your gut turn over, you probably have passions, desires, and hopes similar to mine. You probably also have sleepless nights with panicky feelings as you realize your life is passing and you haven't done the one thing you know above all else that you were put on this planet to do. If you are that person and you are daily experiencing the agony of the story that has gone untold in your life, then I should let you know, "*you've gotta fever and the only prescription is for you to Jump Ship . . .*"

You spend a third of your life sleeping and a third of your life working. If that working third of your life is messed up, the ways you spend time with the people you love will be messed up as well.

Finding that dream job and living in that sweet spot can give you the purpose to get out of bed. It can save your marriage or potentially stop a bad one from happening. It can turn you into a positive role model for your (future?) children. The benefits are virtually endless. But, if you ever want to find your right thing, you've gotta quit that wrong thing.

Tomorrow, you are going to wake up and you are going to put on a pair of pants. The real question I have for you is, What are you going to do postpants?

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I'll be making gold records, and I'd love for you to join me.

—JOSH SHIPP

PS: If this is going to be a proper “introduction,” I'd like to get to know you a bit as well.

Please send me a tweet at @JoshShipp and let me know what career you are in now and what your dream gig is.

Pleasure to make your acquaintance, fellow traveler. Let's get this journey started . . .

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## Step Two: Refine Your Dream Job

*“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to walk from here?”*

*“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.*

*“I don’t much care where—” said Alice.*

*“Then it doesn’t matter which way you walk,” said the Cat.”*

*“—so long as I get somewhere,” Alice added as an explanation.*

*“Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”*

—LEWIS CARROLL, *Alice in Wonderland*

If you’ve moved on to step two without writing something down, this next bit—indeed, the rest of this book—is going to be useless to you. Let me put it this way: If you don’t have the guts or discipline to write your dream job down, there’s no way you’re going to have the guts or discipline to actually make it happen. Flip back a few pages and write something down or close the

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book and get on with your life. Otherwise, you're just playing games with yourself and wasting your own time.

Once you've allowed yourself to dream without fear of criticism—once you've fully opened yourself to the world of possibilities and examined what you deeply, truly long for in life, it's time to move on to step two.

Step two isn't free-form and fanciful like step one, but it tends to come more naturally to most of us. This is where you reexamine and refine your dream through the lens of reality. If step one is the heart of your dream—what ignites your passions and stirs your deepest longings, hopes, and desires—then step two is the brain. Step two brings focus, clarity, and shape to your dream—or else discards it altogether. Only the best dreams survive step two.

At this point, your dream job is probably too broadly defined or too vague to be of any real use to you. Or maybe it's too complex or too far removed to serve as any kind of tangible goal. If you want to get there eventually, you'll need to start smaller, simpler, and smarter.

The dream job you defined in step one should drive and guide everything else, but it isn't nearly enough on its own to take you to the end. Wishful thinking is not a strategy. Hopes and desires can't substitute for details and plans.

It's time to get practical.

### **DO THIS STEP OR ELSE**

As much as many of us would love to live in the exuberant glow of step one forever, sooner or later (sooner is usually better), it's time to face certain facts: some dreams are, sadly, out of reach. I wish I could tell you that nothing is impossible, but there is a heap of evidence to the contrary. Remember my childhood friend who wanted to be a fire truck? Sorry kid, that's just not in the cards. It's not going to happen.

Step two is critical because this is where you ask yourself the hard questions. Questions like, What is this job really like? What skills are required, and do I have them? If not, can I learn? Can I really make a living doing this? What will it cost to pursue this? Am I really willing to do what it takes to make this dream happen? What do you mean, “Santa isn’t real”? Failure to ask—and answer—these questions now could trip you up big-time down the road. There are few things sadder than seeing someone invest tons of time and energy into a dream that, at the end of the day, doesn’t really have a chance to survive.

Step two is all about carefully considering each dream in the light of day, about narrowing down and refining the endless possibilities that excite you into a dream you can actually pursue.

This is where you begin to figure out exactly how far you must go and what it will cost to get there. Not until after you’ve done the hard research will you know if your dream job is actually a viable goal—or if it’s even worth it to you.

So, I have a challenge for you:

### **Talk yourself out of your dream job**

Maybe you can’t. That’s great—you might have caught a keeper. But I want you to try nonetheless—and I want you to give it everything you’ve got. Why? Because if you can talk yourself out of your dream job, you probably don’t want it badly enough. If you have (or uncover) good reasons not to pursue this, it’s best to face them and face them soon. Write it off and start over. There’s nothing heroic about forcing it. That’s pretty much the opposite of what we’re all about here.

The truth of the matter is this: you must confront reality now. Otherwise, you run the risk of falling in love with and chasing after the fantasy version of your dream job and not the real thing. You’ll end up as the guy with a “great” job who actually

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hates what he does. What sounds good in theory often looks like crap when it comes right down to it.

Before you invest time, money, sweat, and tears into making this thing happen, you have to know it's achievable. You have to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that it's really, truly what you want to pursue.

A lot of people get hung up here because they start overthinking it. Sure, step two is about figuring out if you really, truly want this specific dream job, but it's important to keep in mind that we're not talking about forever here. Don't measure your specific dream job against what you want in a "for the rest of your life" sort of way—dreams often evolve over time and that's to be expected. You're not sealing your fate or locking yourself into anything. What you are doing is this: you are starting down a path that is going to take some serious time and commitment, so you better be darn sure you want to arrive at the destination and stay there for a while.

It's simple enough: If you don't like the band, don't go to the concert. And if you don't know whether or not you like the band, listen to their music. Ignorance is an excuse that step two eliminates. Do your research and decide. Is this truly what you want to pursue or not?

### **WHY YOU'LL SETTLE**

For some of you, step two is going to be easy for all the wrong reasons. You've been talking yourself out of pursuing your dreams for good "practical" reasons your entire life. The voice inside your head, the one that tells you "it can't be done," is loud and persistent and kicks butt at cross-examinations.

It's also a liar.

Seriously. It's the devil. Call it resistance, call it ghosts, call it



anything but helpful council. What you're hearing, my friends, is the sound of settling.

For others of you, the enemy within will sing a much different tune at step two, because it's a cunning little saboteur. Some of you won't hear criticism at all. You won't be able to think of a single reason not to pursue your dream. It's perfect. You feel good about it. There's no resistance whatsoever. Let's do this!

Be afraid. Be very afraid.

If something inside you doesn't raise concerns or seek desperately for a good excuse to wimp out, you're probably not onto something amazing—you're probably way far off base. Here's the thing: If it's a good dream, you will face resistance. You will want to settle. The only times you don't feel the pull to settle are when you're already settling. The only times you don't feel resistance are when you're doing something selfish or boring or self-destructive. Those things come easy. In my previous book, I talked about how villains don't attack people who aren't threats. If you're not getting pushback, you're either blind, bad, or beaten—or maybe all of them.

If it feels like a brilliant idea, it probably isn't. If it sounds like an easy win, it probably isn't. Don't be fooled. Don't do it for the glory. Look for dreams that have resistance, because when you do, you're onto something.

Either way, in step two, you'll settle because you're afraid to face the facts. We choose not to face the facts because we're afraid of the truth. Oftentimes it's just easier to quit dreaming than to examine the dream closely. You suspect the challenge will prove too hard, so you don't bother investigating. Or you falsely believe it will be easier than it is and would prefer getting started right away rather than doing your homework.

Get on the scale. Balance your checkbook. Ask the hard

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questions and don't wallow in self-pity and despair when you find the answers.

### **SHAKE IT UP**

Before we get too much further, I need to say something you're not going to want to hear: Sometimes you can't just follow your passion.

Much has been written (in recent years, at least) about turning your passion into a full-time job. I mean, that's the dream, right? Get paid for doing what you love.

Well, the situation is actually a little more complicated than that. Can you make a living doing what you love? Yes . . . and no. To be honest with you, it depends. Not every passion or every dream or everything you love to do has profit potential. Some dreams and some hobbies make lousy businesses. Professional careers don't exist for some of this stuff and it'd be tough going getting something started.

The trick is finding that sweet spot where what you love to do and what other people want overlap. Opportunity lies at the point where your passion and its usefulness to other people converge.

See, for a business to exist there have to be at least two things: a product or service and people willing to pay for it. If what you love to do isn't useful to anyone else—if it doesn't create value for other people by solving an obvious and irritating problem or bestowing some desirable benefit—then you're probably never going to make money doing it. Passion isn't enough if there's no business potential.

That said, it's almost always possible to find a career (or make your own) in an area closely related to something you love.

No one is going to pay you to read books for fun, but there are plenty of jobs—book editor, patent lawyer, proposal writer, reviewer/critic, researcher—that require a great deal of reading.

No one is going to pay you for working in your garden or taking care of your own lawn, but they might be interested in buying your flowers or produce or in learning how to create and tend their own garden. There's the opportunity.

The question then becomes: Are any of the opportunities related to what you love interesting to you? If so, dig deeper. If not, pick something else you enjoy and explore the possibilities there.

If you're thinking about starting your own business based on a hobby or personal passion, answering these questions before you continue will help you figure out if the business is really something you'd enjoy and if there's really a market for it.

- Would you enjoy pursuing your hobby/passion full-time, or at least twenty hours a week?
- Do you enjoy teaching others to practice the same hobby / share the same passion?
- Do you like all the details of your hobby, even the parts other people find tedious or boring or difficult?
- If your hobby/passion required a decent amount of administrative work, would you still enjoy it?
- If your paycheck depended on pursuing your hobby/passion, would you still enjoy it?
- Have other people asked for your help related to your hobby/passion?
- Are there enough people out there willing to pay to benefit from your expertise?
- Are there other businesses serving this market? Would you be able to serve this market better?

### **It's All About the Research**

Whether you dream of bringing a new product to market or getting hired at Google, you need to become an expert on everything

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related to your dream job. You'll look like a fool in step three if you don't do this work now.

Say in step one you wrote down that you want to own a coffee shop. Okay. Now, what does that look like? What does it actually mean—what does it actually *require* to own your own coffee shop? Do you know anything about beans, farming, and growing regions? Do you know anything about different roasting, grinding, and brewing methods? Do you know anything about running a retail business? Do you know if there's a market for a coffee shop in your area? Do you know what you could expect to earn running a coffee shop? Do you know anything about management? hiring? customer service? Do you know anything about FDA certification? If not, it's time to learn.

As you think about your dream job and begin to refine it, here's what you need to know:

- The history of the company, business, or product
- The education requirements and potential cost
- The working environment or physical location
- The tools of the trade
- The typical pay you can expect when starting out
- The typical benefits you can expect when starting out
- The time requirements needed to be successful
- The physical requirements
- The skills requirements needed
- The emotional, relational, and physical costs
- The laws and legal issues associated with the job

Intimidated? Allow me to introduce your new best friend—the Internet. Google is your best friend in step two. So much information is available to you today, and much of it is free and can be accessed within three minutes. And don't forget to take ad-

vantage of your local library as well. There's much to be learned from books.

In the end, these questions should challenge you, not defeat you. If these questions challenge your dream and it remains standing—it's worth pursuing. If these questions defeat you, you need to ask yourself why. Are you settling? Are you giving up? Or have you simply discovered you've been barking up the wrong tree?

There's no shame in turning back to step one if you're on the wrong trail.

### **Do You Have What It Takes?**

Once you've thoroughly investigated the ins and outs of your particular dream job, it's time to turn your questions inward. Now that you know what your dream job requires, you must face the reality of whether or not you have what it takes to do it.

Maybe you've realized in your research that your dream job requires you to perform tasks that you take no pleasure in whatsoever, or that it requires you to work in an environment you simply don't like.

Sometimes poor health, injury, or disability will make it next to impossible to successfully pursue your dream. Sometimes you'll simply lack the natural ability your dream job requires, and no amount of education or training will be able to compensate.

This is a great place to flip back to the chapter "Finding Yourself (Part Two)" for a second and reexamine your identity. How well do your interests, skills, beliefs, and unique qualities line up with the nuts and bolts of your chosen dream?

This is really hard to do objectively, because we like to think we can do anything we set our minds to. We can't. Sometimes we're being delusional, and it's obvious to everyone else but us. To everyone else, it's sad and strangely fascinating (like virtually

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every show on TLC) to watch a person cling feverishly to an impossible dream out of unwillingness to accept that it isn't for them. It's like watching the first few weeks of a new season of *American Idol*, where all the desperate, starry-eyed dreamers without any natural ability parade themselves before the public eye declaring themselves to be the next American idol. Then, one by one, they open their mouths and the truth comes out—it's instantly apparent this person is not a good match for their dream. No one will ever pay them to sing; anyone with working ears could make that call accurately.

Now, they might genuinely enjoy singing; after all, you don't have to be good at something to take some pleasure in it, and no one but you can ultimately judge what you do or do not like to do. But something you're bad or even just average at will probably never form the core of your dream job.

What's most astonishing to me in these open-audition scenarios is how many people refuse to accept reality. The judges literally cringe when they hear the contestant caterwaul into a microphone, ask them to please stop, and kindly dismiss them from the competition. At this point, belligerently insisting that, no, you are in fact very, very talented despite whatever people may say, doesn't make you look resolved. *Ah, there's a fighter!* No. It makes you look pathetic.

Don't be pathetic. If you've latched onto a dream that is clearly unsuitable, face the facts and let it go. If it's a bad fit, guess what? It was never meant to be your dream. You'll never be called to something you're completely incapable of doing well. You may want something you're not cut out for, but that doesn't mean it's a good dream, or one that would even make you ultimately happy and satisfied with life.

This brings us to the step two question that trumps them all.

### **Why Do You Want This?**

Take the first answer that pops into your head and write it down. Examine it. Ask yourself if it's true. Why is achieving this so important to you?

When most people get to step two, the kinds of questions they ask are shallow and irrelevant: How much money will I make? Will I look cool? Will it impress so and so? Will it make my dad proud?

Stop. Start over. Those are stupid reasons to jump. You're chasing a stupid dream. Don't do it for status. Don't marry yourself to an idea for the wrong reasons—because it's cool or sexy or sounds important or gives you an excuse for tooling around and telling crazy stories and griping about how hard it is and how tortured you are. If you don't have anything to say, shut up. If you don't have a vision, or don't have talent, don't fake it. Don't be a poser because you're jealous, because you feel that somehow your lot in life—your particular interests, passion, calling, or dream—isn't good enough. You've got to stay true to your heart. Be you. You'll be good at that if you try.

You have to dig deep and face your own motives and set your own priorities. What are you really trying to accomplish here?

Again: Would you do this if there was no payoff?

You might be better off starting this journey on the assumption that you will not be rewarded for your efforts. Seriously. Imagine zero payoff. Imagine you land your dream job, and, as a result, you work longer hours, get paid less than you do now, and lose the respect of all your peers. Is it still appealing to you? Do you still want it?

If the answer is yes, go on.

Sometimes it's helpful at this point to invite feedback from other people. Somehow just talking about your dream out loud

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makes it feel more real. It's "out there." Other people know. They can help you think through options you may have missed or point out strengths or struggles or other factors that might indicate whether or not the dream you're beginning to refine is taking a shape suitable for you.

But remember, nobody cares about your dream the same way you do. Do it for yourself. If you're jumping after this dream for somebody else, you will fail. And you'll be miserable in the meantime.

So don't lean *too* heavily on others' advice about or reactions to your dream, especially at first. The best way to get approval is to not need it. Nobody can tell you if what you're doing is good, meaningful, or worthwhile. You don't need anyone's approval, and the road will be lonely at times. Dreams tend to challenge the status quo and shake things up. Anyone close to you will be affected by your dream, and, remember, settling is natural. It's easier if things stay the same. At the heart of a dream is change, and few people *really* get excited about that. More often than not, people feel threatened when you question the way things are and suggest it could be better. It's that weak, craven, lazy-butt part of a person that resists your dreams at first and urges you to be careful.

When it comes to dreams and self-expression, there is rarely such a thing as "too risky." Some friends of mine were talking about this portfolio review they attended. A couple local design professionals had gathered to offer feedback to whoever wanted it, and a bunch of artists and designers at various stages of education with varied levels of talent showed up to take them up on the offer. One young woman who freelanced as a graphic designer scrolled through her portfolio, describing some of the cards and logos and other graphics she'd put together. Frankly, they were boring—not without skill, but nothing my friend hadn't already



seen a billion unmemorable times in the templates and clip-art galleries of preinstalled software. But here's the thing that was memorable: she stopped halfway through and said, "Sometimes I feel like my designs are too out there." She was so afraid of making something uncommercial, something people wouldn't like, that she made something uninteresting and, as it happens, something people *didn't* like. She sold out with nothing to sell.

Don't tone it down. Stay true to yourself. Don't worry about other people or concern yourself with who is or who isn't a sell-out. Don't distract yourself with observations about overlooked geniuses and overfamous imbeciles. Their path, their success or failure, deserved or not, has no actual bearing on the real question: What are *you* going to do with the short time you have left on the earth? With or without the help or attention of the world at large, what are you going to do?

### **POSSIBLE HURDLES**

Our dreams are typically more ambitious than we realize. They always seem to require a higher level of quality, higher level of commitment, higher level of training, longer hours, bigger sacrifices than we consider at first.

This is why step two is so critical. If you really want a shot at living your dream, you have to do your homework. You have to know the requirements and the cost of your dream. I said it before: If you fail to ask—and answer—the hard questions, you're going to find yourself inadequately equipped to chase your dream. Like finding yourself on a long journey without a map.

But something else can happen if you don't count the cost of your dream—you'll quit. You'll give up because it's just too hard, or just too much, or just too whatever. You'll find every excuse, every reason why you can't make it, why you can't live your dream. You'll wake up one day, right in the middle of chasing

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your dream, and cash it in because you didn't do your homework and jump with eyes wide open about what it was going to take. You came up with a dream but didn't prepare for the long haul—and now you've quit.

Don't let that happen to you—your dream, your life are way too important to leave to chance and half-baked planning. Do your homework. Ask the hard questions. Learn as much as you can about what it is going to take to make your dream happen. If you want to be a designer, learn everything you can about being a designer. If you want to open a coffee shop or be a writer, a graphic artist, a litigator, whatever it may be—learn everything you can about the requirements, the costs, the education and experience needed to see your dream really happen. What you will find is a blueprint for helping you make your dream happen. Without step two, your dream has a possibility but not a probability of happening. Don't get me wrong, it's still a good dream, but it's just not one that is worth jumping for—yet.

The last step in this journey is mastering and mentoring. I'll tell you right now, it takes a long time to become a master. All you need to worry about now is starting off on the right foot.

### **MAKING THE JUMP**

You've done your research. You've brought your dream out of the ether and wrapped it in reality. What remains is tangible. Something worth jumping for.

You'll continue to refine your dream over time, but you're circling in on it now. You're pinpointing the target, specifying the exact destination of this journey. It's time to write a refined version of your dream. Here's your chance. Knowing what you know now—having asked yourself all the questions posed by this chapter, what does your dream look like? You have a lot of new information at your disposal, so be as specific as you can be.

Text TK

Embrace your limitations, focus on your strengths, sing in your own voice, ignore the critics, stop making excuses, and get ready to keep working your tail off.

That's it. There she is. Go get her, tiger.

### **TALES OF THE JUMP**

Ryan Duffy was a pilot in the navy for nine and a half years before he made a transition to the “real” world. He had attended the prestigious United States Naval Academy and knew upon graduation that he would be obligated to serve in the armed forces, but he wasn't always sure that he could be a career navy man. Three years into the service, at the age of twenty-six, he had decided that he didn't want to fly for the rest of his working life.

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*Steps one and two can be repeated as many times as necessary to land a dream job that feels like a good fit and stands up under investigation. Don't move forward until you're ready.*

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At that point, Ryan began to seek other career possibilities. Through that process, he landed on the law.

**Tell us a bit about your transition.**

The navy was a great experience, but I wasn't passionate about flying. Some people find this hard to believe, but that was the truth for me. I wanted something that would challenge me in a more academic fashion, yet where I could still be forced to think on my feet. Additionally, I wouldn't have to deploy away from my family. I did face some resistance to this "plan" of mine. Most people could not understand why I didn't love to fly and thought I was crazy to be walking away from a large signing bonus and a very safe and secure paycheck.

**After you decided what your dream job actually was, what sort of research did you do to determine if the job was a fit for you?**

Most of the research I did was hands-on. I found any lawyer I could to talk to. I would pick their brain as to what their work was like and how they did their job. I especially wanted to know what their day-to-day life was like. If this was the job I was headed for, I needed all the information I could get.

Usually, I ended each interview session by asking for names of other lawyers who might be willing to give me advice. My goal was to get at least one additional name for every person I talked to. You'd be surprised how many people are willing to help, especially when it's just a few minutes to talk through their career choices.

**What sort of feedback did you get from the people around you? Did anyone try and talk you out of it? Did you try and talk yourself out of it?**

I have to say that I did receive more negative feedback than positive. A majority of the lawyers I spoke with tried to talk me out

of it. The economy is too tough, the hours are long, or most lawyers aren't that happy with the time they put in. These were the comments I would get when speaking with other lawyers. Don't get me wrong, there were people who had great things to say about the job.

Other people outside the law tried to discourage me. As I said before, people could not understand why I would risk walking away from a secure job (not only secure, but sexy in a Tom Cruise sort of way) just to go back to school and start all over. When you hear people talk like this over and over, you can't help but doubt your decision. Yet when you know, you just know. After an enormous amount of research and time in prayer, I knew it was a risk worth taking. I heard somewhere that a person spends more time working than anything else. If that is true, then I figured I'd better be doing something I love.

#### **How did the research process narrow your focus?**

After speaking with many people and reading anything I could get my hands on, I decided I should start focusing on making a plan and then executing it. Particularly, I needed to decide which law school to attend and what type of law I wanted to practice. There were dozens of factors, everything from finances to taking steps to network in the right area of law. Being a bit of a type A personality, I made a detailed plan and saw it through.

I really can't tell you how much the research helped, though. Listening to the thoughts of others can't replace personal experience, but the more you can internalize advice, the better off you'll be. It helps mitigate the frustration of obstacles when you can recognize a situation and say, "Oh, this is what interview subject number fourteen went through, and this is how they overcame this obstacle." Learning the experience of others won't necessarily

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make things easier, but it'll prepare you for when things get rough and your plan needs improvisation.

Currently, Ryan is practicing law and enjoying his new career immensely. That's not to say it's always easy. There are times the pressures of Ryan's new life wear on him, and there are times he is forced to remind himself that being a lawyer was the goal he wanted to pursue. It's important to remember that making the jump doesn't resolve everything, that reaching new life goals is a process that never really ends.

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