

How to Start a Fire:

Find what you are passionate about and focus the flame

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Introduction

When you know your purpose you wake up eager to start the day. You know just what you want to do and can't wait to get to it. Purpose is the reason we are here, and an important part of our happiness. Passion is a powerful emotion or feeling. When you know what you are passionate about, you connect with an amazing renewable energy source.

Passion is the fire that fuels purpose. Purpose is the laser beam that harnesses the energy of passion and focuses it toward meaningful accomplishments.



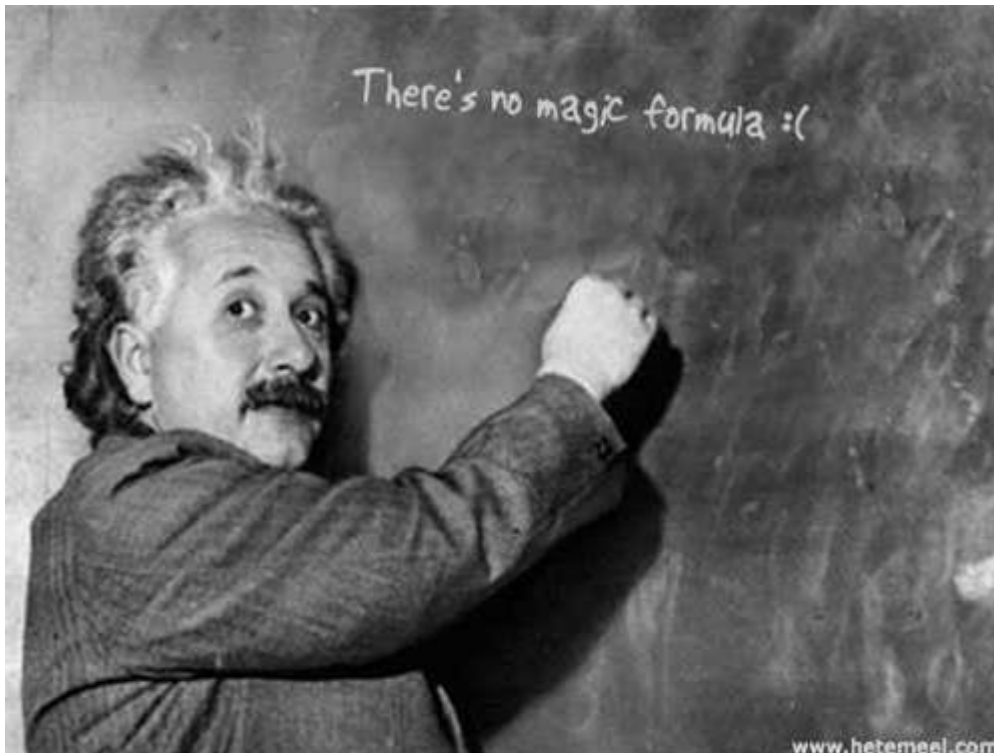
But what if you don't know what you are passionate about? What if you don't know what your talents are and how you will use them? Some people seem to have no difficulty discovering what they are passionate about and what their talents are. For others, it can be challenging to figure these things out. The tools in this book can help.

START HERE!

Download a one page [self-assessment form](#) to capture the information you gather with these tools to explore:

- **Interests and Personality**
- **Skills**
- **Strengths**
- **Personal Qualities**
- **Values**
- **Talents**

Find the Spark and Focus the Flame



While I have not found a magic formula for discovering passions and talents, I can point to some ways to look for clues. Once you have found the spark, focus the flame with personal branding tools that increase clarity

with the goal of communicating the special value that you provide.

“Where the needs of the world and your talents cross, there lies your vocation”

– Aristotle

The Japanese word **ikigai** roughly translates to “the thing that you live for” or “the reason for which you get up in the morning.”



[credit: [Wikimedia](#)]

Locate the intersection between:

- what you're best at
- what you love to do the most
- what the world needs most
- what you can be paid for

This book is a toolkit with links to the top tools for locating this intersection in each chapter.

Chapter 1 Interests



Interests are things you love to learn about, and enjoy to a degree. Interests are indicated by your favorite websites, how you like to spend your spare time, hobbies you enjoy, and the subjects you like to read or learn more about. A mild interest might only be pursued in leisure time, but following an intense interest could become a lifelong career. Exploring interests can help identify good career choices, so there are some wonderful resources available at websites dedicated to the career search process.



Holland Codes are Six Personality Types developed to help match interests to careers. They are: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, enterprising, and Conventional. Identify your Holland Code with the O*Net Interest Profiler or Interest Assessments at careerwise.minnstate.edu.



Career Clusters group similar occupations and industries for career planning. A Career Cluster Survey is available at careerwise.minnstate.edu. Once you know your Holland Code, it can be matched to Career Clusters. Try one of the tools for identifying interests and list your top three **interests**.



[TOOLS](#) to explore interests at List.ly

[PERSONALITY](#)

The Myers-Briggs is a well-known personality assessment. | [Myers-Briggs and more](#) Pinterest Board

What's Your Personality Type?

Use the questions on the outside of the chart to determine the four letters of your Myers-Briggs type. For each pair of letters, choose the side that seems most natural to you, even if you don't agree with every description.

1. Are you outwardly or inwardly focused? If you:

- Could be described as talkative, outgoing
- Like to be in a fast-paced environment
- Tend to work out ideas with others, think out loud
- Enjoy being the center of attention

then you prefer **E**
Extraversion

- Could be described as reserved, private
- Prefer a slower pace with time for contemplation
- Tend to think things through inside your head
- Would rather observe than be the center of attention

then you prefer **I**
Introversion

3. How do you prefer to make decisions? If you:

- Make decisions in an impersonal way, using logical reasoning
- Value justice, fairness
- Enjoy finding the flaws in an argument
- Could be described as reasonable, level-headed

then you prefer **T**
Thinking

- Base your decisions on personal values and how your actions affect others
- Value harmony, forgiveness
- Like to please others and point out the best in people
- Could be described as warm, empathetic

then you prefer **F**
Feeling

2. How do you prefer to take in information? If you:

- Focus on the reality of how things are
- Pay attention to concrete facts and details
- Prefer ideas that have practical applications
- Like to describe things in a specific, literal way

then you prefer **S**
Sensing

- Imagine the possibilities of how things could be
- Notice the big picture, see how everything connects
- Enjoy ideas and concepts for their own sake
- Like to describe things in a figurative, poetic way

then you prefer **N**
Intuition

4. How do you prefer to live your outer life? If you:

- Prefer to have matters settled
- Think rules and deadlines should be respected
- Prefer to have detailed, step-by-step instructions
- Make plans, want to know what you're getting into

then you prefer **J**
Judging

- Prefer to leave your options open
- See rules and deadlines as flexible
- Like to improvise and make things up as you go
- Are spontaneous, enjoy surprises and new situations

then you prefer **P**
Perceiving

Another way to understand personality types based on brain dominance and energy focus is found in the the book “Will the Real You Please Stand Up” by David Borchard. Try one of the tools for identifying personality type and list the result.



[TOOLS](#) to explore personality at List.ly

While it can be helpful to understand personality and explore Interests, the next chapters cover areas of increasing importance for discovering purpose.

Chapter 2 Skills



Skills are abilities that can be learned. If you think of projects you have accomplished that you are especially proud of, you were quite likely using skills to make them happen.

- **Job skills** are specific to an occupation, like special computer software or reading blueprints.
- **Transferable skills** are general work skills like the ability to use a computer program or writing a report.
- **Self management skills** are personal qualities like being analytical or reliable.

The Secretaries Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) categorizes skills as:

Basic Skills, Thinking Skills, and Personal Qualities.

More skills include:

Work Skills like customer service and meetings.

Soft Skills like communication and teamwork.

Computer Skills like word processing and email.

Life Skills like goal setting and time management.

Since skills are important for careers, tools to identify skills can also be found at career websites. There is a skills assessment at careeronestop.org. Try one of the tools for identifying skills and list your top three skills.



[TOOLS](#) to Explore skills at List.ly (see also the [Work Skills Toolkit](#))



DEVELOP SKILLS

Skills are like the blades on a Swiss army knife: the more you have the better. Find lots of resources to [develop skills](#) at the Daily Plant.

Chapter 3 Strengths

[Strengths](#) are developed skills and talents. Your strengths may be what others say you are good at. A SWOT analysis is a tool that looks at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. A printable SWOT form is available at the link above.

SWOT analysis

Strengths-things I'm good at	Weaknesses-things to work on
Personal qualities, skills, talents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My biggest strength is... • An example is... • The project I'm proudest of is... • I really get motivated when... • What I really appreciate is... • I am most interested in... • The skills that have helped me most are... 	To develop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My biggest failure/disappointment has been... • The thing I would most like to change about myself/ my life is... • I would really like to learn more about...
1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Opportunities-things that could help	Threats-things that might stop me
Top Goals or Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is most important to me is... • What I want to do next is... • One task/idea/project I'd most like to try is... • The thing I most enjoy doing is... • I really gain energy when I... 	Top Obstacles or Problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The problems that are keeping me from doing what I want are... • I am really stumped by... • Some ideas for solutions are... • The least favorite thing I have to do is...
1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Try one of the tools for identifying strengths and list three strengths.



[TOOLS](#) to explore strengths at List.ly

In the same way we can develop physical strength with exercise, we can develop strength in all areas. The book “The Power of Full Engagement” by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz has ideas for developing four sources of energy: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

Marcus Buckingham is an expert on strengths who has written several books. The purchase of one of his books provides access to his Strengths Finder.

Chapter 4 Talents

Talents are natural abilities. We feel joy and gain energy when we use our talents. Maybe you have natural athletic or artistic ability. Perhaps you enjoy cooking or writing. Are there times when you have been so immersed in an activity that you forgot to eat? This experience of complete absorption is known as flow, and it might point the way to your talents.



Find Flow

Flow is the sweet spot when challenge and skill are in perfect balance. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, one of the co-founders of Positive Psychology, author of the book “Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience,” describes flow as “being completely involved in an activity for it’s own sake.”

“ Flow is playful
work or serious
play. ”

David Shernoff

The experience of flow can be reached through athletics, recreational activities or work. Whatever the activity you are doing is, you become so absorbed in it that you lose all track of time.



Name Your Talent

The “[Naming Your Genius](#)” exercise from the book “Is Your Genius at Work?” by Dick Richards is the best exercise I know for discovering your talents. A printable Finding Genius list of gerunds and nouns may provide inspiration for this exercise. On a nametag, write a gerund (a verb ending in ing) and a noun that describe what you love to do. Example: Creating Clarity

Try one of the tools for identifying talents and list your top three.



[TOOLS](#) to explore talents at List.Ly

Discovering talents can take some time and thought. Keep trying activities you might love, and be aware of times when you experience flow. When you know what you are naturally good at, you can develop these abilities into strengths.

Chapter 5 Personal Qualities



Personal qualities are positive personal traits. In the career field, personal qualities may be called self-management skills. Employers want applicants who are responsible, honest, and flexible. These are also qualities you probably want in a friend or partner. People you admire often possess these traits.

“The true test of character is what you do when no one is looking.” - John Wooden



Find personal qualities that describe you on a list, or ask friends and relatives what they think. Sometimes our qualities aren't always obvious to us, but may be to others. A Johari window compares words that we would use to describe ourselves with words others would use.

Try one of the tools for identifying personal qualities and list your top three.



[TOOLS](#) to explore personal qualities at List.ly

Chapter 6 Values

Values are your guiding principles.

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

Value Definitions:

1. the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something.
2. a person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life.

Core values have intrinsic worth and are fairly universal among cultures and religions. The Six Pillars of Character at Josephson Institute are examples of core values.



Personal values are subjective and can vary. You might place a high value on art or humor, while others may value something else.

Work values are what you value in a work environment.



Try one of the tools for identifying values and list your top three. [TOOLS](#) to explore values at List.ly

Chapter 7 Passion & Purpose



Have you found the elusive spark of passion as you have explored these tools? There are a few more [Clues to Purpose](#). Here is another way to look.

What is your tennis ball?

“The most successful people are obsessed with solving an important problem, something that matters to them. They remind me of a dog chasing a tennis ball.”

Drew Houston

Drew Houston, founder of Dropbox, said this in an MIT commencement speech, and looking for what you are always chasing is a very good way to identify what you are passionate about. What problems do you want to solve? What causes do you believe in? What lights your face up when you talk about it? What do you want to share with others? If you are still not sure, you can try learning about new things, or...

Build your purpose and [design your life like an architect](#).

"Meaning is not something you stumble across, like the answer to a riddle or the prize in a treasure hunt.

Meaning is something you build into your life." - John Gardner

The next step is to focus the flame with personal branding tools which help you to clarify and communicate your purpose.



[TOOLS](#) to explore passion and meaning at List.ly and at the [Brand and Purpose Toolkit](#)

There are lots of wonderful tools here: Oprahs' Find Your Passion Exercise and the Pave Your Life Roadmap from Idea Sandbox are great. You can also find a Wheel of Life which shows balance in different life areas.

Chapter 8 Personal Branding



A personal brand communicates the special benefits you provide. It is the authentic expression of the elements that we have been exploring.

Are you ready with an answer to the question “What do you do?” or “Tell me about yourself?” Do you have a clear, concise, creative, compelling answer to these questions? Personal branding tools help you get very clear about how you will use your talents for a purpose. With the clarity you gain, you can share a clear message about:

- What you do
- Why you do it
- How you do it

Your Value Statement

A Value Statement is a way to communicate the special value you provide in a concise, clear statement. A Value Statement helps you stay focused on what is most important to you. It may be called a Mission Statement or a Unique Selling Proposition (USP), sometimes known as a Unique Value Proposition.

Elements of a Value Statement: Because I believe in [this] passionately I will [use these talents] for [these benefits] by doing [what] how [in this unique way] to [solve this problem]. Consider all these elements, and

choose what to include and how to combine them.

First cast a wide net to gather the information needed, and then condense it down to the essentials. This process is similar to how a writer creates a character: they learn all about the interests and motivations of the character, even though only a small amount of the information may make it into the story. That underlying knowledge of the character makes for compelling writing. A USP and an elevator speech are similar; they are like an iceberg, with only the tip showing. With this information you can elaborate with more detail depending on the situation and the response. Crafting a value statement is not an easy task, and it is an ongoing process, but it is the best tool for finding focus.

Start with the basics:

1. Who: who are you, and who is your target audience?
2. What: do you do, with what talents? What problems do you solve, what projects are you working on, what is unique about it, what are the benefits of what you offer, what value is added?
3. Why: because you are passionate about, believe in, interested in what?

Make it interesting:

1. Start with Why. In his TED Talk, Simon Sinek says “People don’t buy what we do, they buy why we do it.” They are also most interested in our why.
2. Use a colorful metaphor that describes the benefit, process, or result of what you do.
3. Use an image that captures and communicates the ideas.
4. Use a story that connects with emotion. Describe how you first became interested in what you do.

Combine your Value Statement into an **elevator speech** that inspires interest and starts a conversation:

•Hi, I’m (name)

•I’m a (metaphor for what you do)

•Because I believe in (this)

•I am a (job description)

•To solve (this problem)

- I provide (this product or service)
- For (this target audience)
- To provide (these results and benefits)
- I do this by (doing this in this unique way)

Next Steps:

- Practice. Videotape yourself and watch it. Practice it some more!
- Memorize data/statistics that back it up.
- Add a story about how you have had an impact.
- Choose colors, graphics, logos, tag lines and media to use on a resume, business cards, email and social profiles
- Go to a deeper level of planning with a [one page personal strategic planning form](#)
- Create a manifesto (like the [Holstee Manifesto](#)) - a written statement that describes the intentions and opinions of a person (or group).

Read more about how personal branding is a powerful way to discover purpose at my [Productive Magazine article](#).

Use the tools for identifying your personal brand and create a value statement.



[TOOLS](#) to develop a Personal Brand at List.ly | [Branding](#) board and [Manifesto](#) board at Pinterest

Conclusion

The tools in this book help to uncover hidden talents and gain clarity about how you will use them to add value to life. With this knowledge you can take steps for purposeful action to make your special contribution to the world. Thank you for exploring these tools for discovering your talents, what you are passionate about, and how you will focus this energy for a purpose that is meaningful to you!

RESOURCES

All the toolkits can be found at [List.ly](https://list.ly) and the Daily PlanIt [Resource page](#).

My Udemy course “On Purpose: Uncover Your Hidden Talents and Discover Direction” at

<https://www.udemy.com/on-purpose/> shows in more detail how to discover hidden talents. This eBook is a condensed version of the course, which provides access to several more tools, like the Daily PlanIt Talent Table.



You're invited to continue learning about developing life and work skills at the Daily PlanIt

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