



weLEAD Online Magazine

leadingtoday.org
©2009 Richard E Goldman

Living and Working With Purpose

Author of Luck by Design: Certain Success in an Uncertain World

By Richard E. Goldman



Everything that arises in your life is there for one purpose only -- to teach you to exercise an underutilized aspect of your life. Because work involves contact with other people, the underutilized aspects of your life can become more apparent as you compare and contrast yourself with others. Of course, this can only happen when you're present. Sometimes this can be particularly painful; it's a natural reaction to resist and avoid those aspects of ourselves that are weak. But sometimes the most painful lessons are the ones that have the most benefit in the long run.

First, there has to be a you, and then there is your job. Similarly, as a parent, although you are responsible for the development of your child, you are still you. The previous chapters have helped you look at that being who is you; this chapter takes it one step further in helping bring that inner self to the workplace. The most important aspect in doing that is congruency -- striving to match your inner self with your outer self and creating harmony between your heart and your head. When we look at the outer world, we don't see the world as it is; we see it only as we are at that moment. Yes, you're going to have to work, but if you can see that when you change your beliefs, you change the world around you, the chances of your creating congruency increase exponentially.

Here's a simple way to think about changing your beliefs and how doing so changes the world around you. Have you ever bought a car and then suddenly noticed how many cars the same as the model you bought are on the road? It's a pretty common reaction. But there aren't really any more of those cars on the road (except yours): what has changed is your awareness of that particular make and model of car. By purchasing the car that you did, you changed your vested interest in the car, and you brought a new level of attention to it, thereby changing your view and belief about that car.

The discussion of work in this chapter is divided into seven sections:

1. **Why work?**
2. **What are you "supposed" to do?**
3. **What are you doing?**
4. **You are going to have to struggle.**
5. **You are going to have to develop discipline.**
6. **Success isn't easy or self-sustainable.**
7. **Are you going to be the CEO?**

These sections cover work from the inside (how do *you* approach work) to the outside (what does your *work* have to do with you).

Why Work?

When you sit down and think about your life, think about this: the question is not what or why, but *how* are you going to live? Work is an integral part of how you're going to live and how you are going to be in the world. A fulfilling life is passion driven and a big part of that life derives from the work that you do. It doesn't matter *what* the work is. What matters is the passion that you have behind it and that you put into it. The same applies for the rest of your life.

Each one of us has a reason for being and a contribution to make; why not strive to make these more than financial survival? Yes, finances are important, but if you work at a job that just pays the bills without providing an outlet for your passion, then the ultimate cost to you is far more than the bills that might be due. The cost is compromising and stifling your creative intellect and wasting your time -- a whole lot of it. Know that you can be in control, at the helm of your own destiny, by the decisions you make in all aspects of your life -- especially regarding the work that you choose to do and how you choose to do it. Remember that everything counts: you will be at your happiest when you are expressing your essential nature and creating your mark on the world through the work that you do.

Do you always seem to have a "bad boss" or "never get a break" at work? It may have something to do with what *you* are presenting to the world. Your outer working life has to reflect your inner organization. Make sure that you have your personal values and ethos in order, and then take them to the workplace. The reality is that there are no bad bosses, and there are no bad breaks. And there are no victims -- unless you choose to become one. **Stop!** Take a moment to re-read this paragraph. It's easy enough to read, but really understanding the content can take a lifetime. Give yourself an advantage and contemplate it now: what you bring to your work makes all the difference.

What Are You Supposed to Do?

Each of us has our own specific "true calling" -- an answer to the question, "What am I supposed to do?" At the most fundamental level, we each need to feel like we are doing something worthwhile and that we are

making a positive contribution to the planet. We need to be able to leave work at the end of the day, feeling tired yet energized because we've done something that matters and that our work outside the home has meaning.

How do you figure out who you are, what your place in the world is, and what you're "supposed" to do? If you grew up in a supportive family, you were told that you could be anything you set your mind to. That's a lovely message, but it's pretty nonspecific. If you grew up in a household with less support, non-specificity is the least of your problems.

Figuring out what you're supposed to do is actually simpler than you think: *do what brings you joy*. **Stop!** Think about that right now. If there were no negative consequences -- financial or otherwise -- what do you see yourself doing for work that would bring you joy? Is it possible for you to be doing that "thing" at this moment in your life? Perhaps not, but you've taken one important step in getting to that "thing" by identifying it to begin with. You can begin the process of getting there *right now*.

Is it easier said than done? Sure, but if you pay attention, your intuition will guide you. Sometimes it's tricky to differentiate between the voice of your ego and the voice of your soul. The voice of your ego is the one that tells you what you "should" be doing, based mostly on voices and opinions that you have heard and continue to hear from the outside world. This is *not* a helpful voice. The voice of the soul is the one that will keep gently drawing you to the things you love. When you follow your heart's desire and listen to your intuition, work turns into pleasure. Will it always be this way? Probably not, which is why paying attention -- being present, quiet, and calm -- is also imperative in your work life. What you're sure you should be doing at this stage of your life might end up being what you need to be getting away from five years from now. Times change, and people change. Getting quiet not only helps you find your *self*, it also helps you find your right *place for the right time*, by trusting your own inner voice.

What Are You Doing?

As you're contemplating what you're supposed to be doing, also ask yourself this question: "What am I doing with my life now?" It is certainly a pretty big question, and it's one that you have to pause and ask yourself often. Time, that old enemy, is moving on, and if you don't stop and ask the really tough questions, you'll find yourself very old and very upset that you've spent your time doing "work" that you didn't want to do.

When was the last time you woke up in the morning and were really *excited* about the work that you're about to do? Take a moment to really think about that question. Was it this morning? Yesterday morning? Maybe it wasn't even last week or last month. If it was last year, then it's past time to take a hard look at what you're doing. And read on.

If the work that you do is diminishing your ability to live an abundant life rather than adding to it, it is time to make a change. By identifying your unique skills and talents, you can discover the true meaning in your life and live more authentically. You won't be able to do this if your work is taking from, rather than adding to, your life.

If you're currently employed and wondering about why you're there, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the work inspirational as well as perspirational?
- Are you inspiring others?
- Are you leaving others in a better condition than you found them?
- Are there people in the company that you admire?
- Do you admire the company?
- If you weren't working there and it was possible to avail yourself of your company's product or service, would you?
- Is the work complementary to the rest of your life?
- Is it using your abilities to develop greater capacities?
- Is there a place for your beliefs and values?
- Are your little idiosyncrasies welcomed, tolerated, or outright shunned?
- Does it just plain feel right?

If your answer to most of these questions is no, then you need to take a long, hard look at what you're doing. First, make your best effort to change your own position, and even take a stab at improving the culture around you. If you feel that you've done this to no avail, you need to develop your exit plan. I'm not advocating that you turn in your resignation tomorrow -- there are bills to be paid and responsibilities to be met -- but for your own well-being, you need to begin to work in the direction of leaving your current work and finding something else that has more meaning for you.

If you are a student in college or graduate school and you feel that you're in a rut or have answered *no* to many of the above questions, then you need to reevaluate your situation. Again, start from a place of changing the current situation -- don't let "bail" be the default answer. Maybe the *no* answers have to do with what you're doing when you're not in class, or not studying. You're the best judge.

A degree is important, but if it comes at the cost of boredom, then it's an expensive lesson, both financially and spiritually. Perhaps you've chosen the wrong major; know that it's never too late to right that wrong. Perhaps you're trying too hard to graduate in X number of years and have overloaded yourself with courses; that decision is another wrong that can be righted. Maybe you're just burned out with school. Most colleges make it pretty easy for you to either take a leave of absence or to cut back on your course load. Take advantage of that flexibility in any way you can.

If you're a parent who feels like you have stayed at home too long, you have choices as well. How old are your children? Do they need you 24/7 or is there a way that you can get out of the house during part of the day to do something that challenges your intellect a little more? For that matter, given the wide range of possibilities on the Internet, you can take a course, start a business, or be involved in something greater than yourself from your home at any hour of the day -- even at sporadic naptimes. You just have to make the commitment to do it.

The questions "What am I doing?" is not a question that you can ask yourself once in life and then be done. It is a question that you should ask yourself often -- maybe daily. It's far too easy to get stuck in a situation where you are comfortable, where asking *any* question, especially, "What am I doing?" involves way too much risk. Well, know this: the risk, the penalty, for *not* asking the question often enough is far greater than the reward for ignoring the question. If work is indeed the portal to the rest of your life, and the way you can bring out your unique qualities, then you need to ask the questions to ensure that you are being and doing the best that you can. If a path feels like a struggle, is part of the struggle because it's not the right path for you? This is not to say that the path will be easy, but if the obstacles come from within, they may be telling you something you need to pay attention to.

And finally, one of the ways to find out what you "should" be doing is to discover what you *shouldn't* be doing. I suppose this is code for *get a job!* One way to find out what you like is to discover what you don't like, so don't be dismissive of jobs that you don't *think* you're going to like. And be careful of becoming a "professional student." Several members of my advisory board indicated that they were going to school because they hadn't figured out what they wanted to do with their lives. An undergraduate degree is important, but unless you know what you want to do with a degree beyond that, be careful. School is very expensive and very time-consuming; some breathing room and exposure to the working world after so many years in school is probably a good thing.

About the author:

Richard E. Goldman is author of *Luck by Design: Certain Success in an Uncertain World*. Widely recognized as the marketing mastermind behind the success of Men's Wearhouse, Goldman has also been a quiet force in business, education, and volunteerism. To learn still more about *Luck by Design*, how you can incorporate luck into your future, and to share your own "lucky" experiences, visit www.richiegoldman.com.