

A photograph of a gravel road that splits into two paths, leading into a rural landscape with pine trees and a cloudy sky. The text 'CAREER TRANSITION PLAYBOOK' is overlaid in white on a dark grey rounded rectangle in the upper half of the image.

CAREER TRANSITION PLAYBOOK

BOUNDLESS

The Career Transition Playbook:

How to land your dream job; or at least move in a better direction

I've coached many people in making career transitions and to me, it is a pretty straightforward process. I think about it in a number of steps and when executed with commitment, enthusiasm, and drive, I believe anyone can land their dream job—or at least a job they are really excited about.

I've helped a school teacher become a strategy consultant; a social worker become a recruiter at a startup; a news producer become a marketer in academia; a nurse become an IT consultant. Anything is possible.

Are you ready?



#1

What matters?

You must be quite the soothsayer to know the answer to “what do you want to do?” Instead, you should focus on what drives you, what you value and how you are motivated. We will dive deeper into some of these questions later, but it’s good to change the frame by reflecting on some of my favorite questions:

• • •

1. *What do you value most?*
2. *What kind of life do you want to live?*
3. *What matters most to you?*
4. *What do you want to cause?*
5. *What do you prioritize in terms of your time and energy?*
6. *What drains you from being your best self?*
7. *What role does work have in your life?*
8. *What are the conditions that enable you to thrive?*
9. *Who inspires you? Why?*
10. *What do your friends come to you for in or out of work?*

• • •

Find space on the next couple of pages to reflect on these questions

What do you value most?

What kind of life do you want to live?

What matters most to you?

What do you want to cause?

What do you prioritize in terms of your time and energy?

What drains you from being your best self?

What role does work have in your life?

What are the conditions that enable you to thrive?

Who inspires you? Why?

What do your friends come to you for in or out of work?

Takeaways or Reflections:



A close-up photograph of a weathered wooden door. A heavy metal chain is wrapped around the door and secured with a large, rectangular padlock. The wood shows signs of age, with cracks and small holes. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the wood and metal.

#2

Check your beliefs at the
door

Why haven't you made a change yet? I doubt that this "playbook" was the missing piece keeping you from taking action.

More likely is that you have some sort of beliefs around why you cannot do something.

- Are you supposed to stay in your job a certain number of years?
- Do other people typically not follow the path you want to take?
- Do you not have enough experience?
- Do you not have the right skills?
- Do you have a fear of trying?

These beliefs you have are likely the result of what other people have gotten you to believe. I'm not an expert on changing your mind, but the key thing is realizing that there is something holding you back.

Write down 1-2 beliefs or reasons why you think you cannot make a career change or transition:

1.

2.

Have you always believed these? Where do these beliefs come from?

Write down the long-term cost of this belief remaining to be true (e.g. "I will remain unhappy in my job, which impacts my personal life):

Long-Term Costs:

Now, write down an "empowering belief"—something opposite of the original belief: e.g. (if you wrote, "I do not have enough experience", write "I have enough experience for this job"):

1.

2.

What evidence do you have to support this empowering belief or what actions can you take to make it be true? (e.g. "I have a lot of experience from side projects I can bring to this job" or "I can take an online course to become better at skill X")

Evidence:

Actions:

Now look at the below the words and **circle** the answer to the following question:

Is it worth moving forward with your new empowering belief?

YES NO

(see next page for the correct answer)

YES NO

Hopefully you chose yes...

GREAT, let's keep going

A hand is shown pointing at a map, with the index finger touching a specific location. The background is blurred, featuring several out-of-focus light spots (bokeh) in warm tones. The overall scene suggests a focus on research or exploration.

#3

Research Potential Careers

Ideally, you have some idea of the industry, location or function you want to change to. If not, that's okay too.

When working with people looking for a new job, I usually have them first start with location. A good way to do this is to google "Top Companies in Boston" or wherever you are looking.

There are often lists of different size companies — major corporations, medium-sized companies or startups — these lists often trigger ideas of places or jobs you may not have thought of.

Other places to look at include:

Google Job Search: One of the best job search engines that aggregates all other job boards (including LinkedIn), but a bit tricky to access. First, pull up google.com and type in something like "jobs in Boston." You will get the job results and you can open their platform to customize your search and even get e-mail alerts.

Glassdoor — Check out places that are rated as great places to work

TheMuse.com — A great way to get a glimpse into a company's culture — this new job search site focuses on increasing transparency between employer and potential employees

LinkedIn — The job search algorithm can often recommend potential jobs for people from your background. Trying a couple keyword searches of things that excite you may also inspire some other ideas

Ask friends — Ask people that know you well and ask "where should I be working?" You never know who they might know...

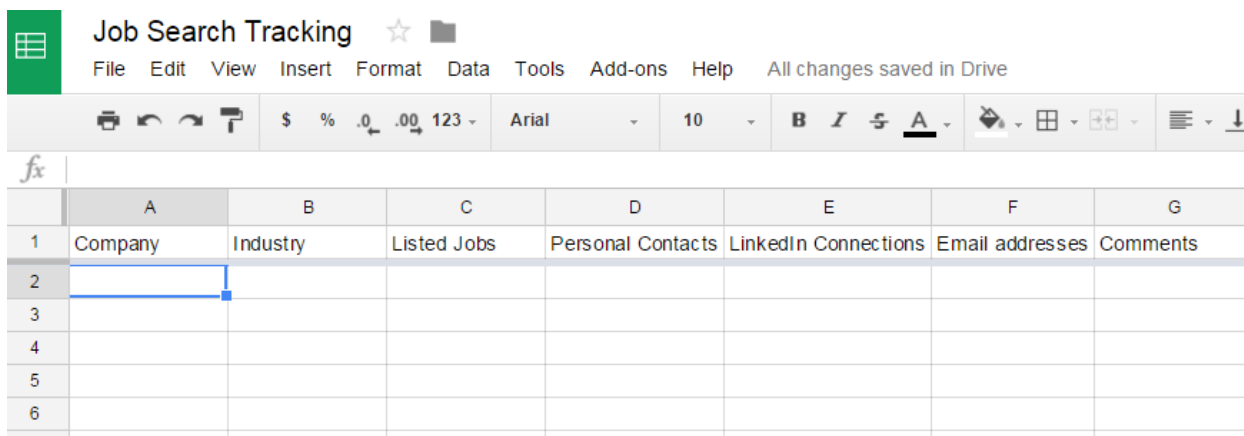
A close-up photograph of Scrabble tiles on a wooden surface. The tiles are arranged to spell the word 'SHARE' in a white wooden rack. The letters are S, H, A, R, and E, each with a small number indicating its point value. The background is a wooden table with several other Scrabble tiles scattered around, including 'D', 'Y', 'U', and 'R'.

#4

Track and Share

Practically, I recommend starting a google doc tracking companies you are interested in. You'll want columns for the company, location, any posted jobs you are interested in and any personal or professional connections you have. A good way to hold yourself accountable in this process is to share it with someone who will keep you motivated and commit to sending them tracking reports every week.

You can create your own or copy a version here: <https://goo.gl/9rjXtD>



The image shows a screenshot of a Google Sheets spreadsheet titled "Job Search Tracking". The spreadsheet has seven columns: Company, Industry, Listed Jobs, Personal Contacts, LinkedIn Connections, Email addresses, and Comments. The rows are numbered 1 through 6. The first row contains the column headers, and the subsequent rows are empty. The spreadsheet is displayed in a web browser interface with a menu bar and a toolbar.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Company	Industry	Listed Jobs	Personal Contacts	LinkedIn Connections	Email addresses	Comments
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							

Example tracking sheet

Pro Tip: Raise the stakes with an accountability partner. Send them \$20 at the beginning of the week via Venmo or PayPal and if you don't send them an update report, they get to keep it. If you're not willing to do this, you should question your commitment...



#5

Assess Your Strengths

Many people skip this step when putting together a resume or looking for a job. Instead, we pursue jobs that are very similar to our current role or accept that we must be slightly miserable at work.

A reflection of your strengths will help you think about work as an environment that will either take enable or waste your strengths. If there is a disconnect between your strengths and what is valued at the organization, this will inevitably lead to frustration. I'm sure you know the feeling...

Here are some questions to think about to assess what you are good at:

- 1. When was the last time you were in a state of flow and completely immersed in your work?*
- 2. What was the last moment of joy you experienced at work?*
- 3. What's the best day of work you've ever had?*
- 4. What's something you do for free that other people wouldn't do for pay?*
- 5. If you are sure you don't want to do what you are currently doing, why are you still doing it?*
- 6. Do you want your boss's job?*
- 7. What is your dream job? How will you feel six months after you get it?*
- 8. What brings you alive?*
- 9. What do your friends from to you for in or out of work?*

Detailed Strengths Exercise

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1:

Write down 5-10 “stories” or examples of impact that show leadership, accomplishments or any other relevant achievements. These would typically be stories you want to share in an interview. Good prompt questions for this include “What are you most proud of at work?” “What do people come to you for?” and “What makes you stand out”

Step 2:

Group the stories by similar themes and start to notice patterns that emerge. For example, if you see three stories where you improved a process, put those together and consider naming the section “process improvement,” “continuous improvement” or something along those lines.

Step 3:

Continue to tweak the stories to align with the three themes you have identified and add context, information or relevant impact. Try to be as detailed as possible. As new details emerge, it may force you to re-name your themes, but try to come up with three.

STEP 1: Document Your Stories

Story #1

Story #2

Story #3

Story #4

Story #5

STEP 2: Start to Identify Your Themes (Note: You can just write a keyword to tag the stories from the previous section)

Theme #1: _____

- Story _____
- Story _____
- Story _____

Theme #2: _____

- Story _____
- Story _____
- Story _____

Theme #3: _____

- Story _____
- Story _____
- Story _____

STEP 3: Fine-Tune Your Themes

Example Themes: Continuous Improvement, Action-Oriented, Obsessive Learner, Problem Solver, Collaborator, People Leadership, Analytical Skills, etc...

Theme #1:

Theme #2:

Theme #3:

#6

Resume



In my experience, people despise creating their resume. However, after going through the previous strengths finding exercise, many people find it much easier. After someone does the deep reflection of what they are good at and where they are going, they can easily communicate those messages in a resume. Here are some principles to follow:

BEST PRACTICES:

- ✓ Be comfortable bragging about yourself, don't be shy
- ✓ Focus on the impact of your actions (see bullet formula on next page)
- ✓ Aim for a one-page resume to really focus on the key things you want to communicate
- ✓ Share details of the secrets behind your success like your personal style, your relationships with people, the way you influence people...
- ✓ Make it easy to read
- ✓ Attention to detail – probably not a good judge of skill but people get distracted by mistakes
- ✓ Consistency: spacing, numbers, dates, etc.
- ✓ Always send it in PDF – different versions of Microsoft Word can distort and mess up your formatting

AVOID THESE TRAPS:

- ✗ Writing your resume to sound like your job description (e.g. “Manage financial weekly reports”) - you are more interesting than this
- ✗ Using a lot of jargon or acronyms specific to a job or industry. You want to be able to communicate what you do such that most people could understand it if they picked up your resume off the street
- ✗ Writing a long resume. Resumes over one page are becoming more common with the increased use of digital copies. However, I often find that long resumes signal that people lack a clear understanding of their story or strengths. Force yourself to get it down to one page as a useful exercise to prioritize the most impactful activities

Resume Bullet Formula

This formula can be used to complete all your bullets in your resume. Use this in combination with the stories you identified in step #5. For each story, you'll want to identify the following three things:

What you did

+

How you did it

+

The impact

Many people just put job responsibilities that read like a job description rather than framing it as something that shows your unique abilities, personalities or accomplishments.

CLIENT EXAMPLE:

Initial bullet:

- Assist with the build and rollout of program X

The problem with this is that it tells you nothing about the person other than the fact that he was responsible for something...So what?

I asked this person questions like: *What was your role on the team? Who did you work with? What was the impact of the new program? What did you do?*

In my experience, these simple questions get people to talk about what really happened and my response is usually “why didn’t you write that?” In our efforts to fit into an imaginary box, we cease to communicate like a human

Here is what we ended up with:

- **Developed and managed the implementation of Program X, working closely with three company Vice Presidents. Developed material and led trainings with over 500 global employees. After three months, Program X led to a reduction in the speed of task X by 50% from 4 hours a month to 2 hours a month, saving the company \$100,000.**

WHAT: Developed and managed the implementation of Program X,

HOW: working closely with three company Vice Presidents. Developed material and led trainings with over 500 global employees.

IMPACT: After three months, Program X led to a reduction in the speed of task X by 50% from 4 hours a month to 2 hours a month, saving the company \$100,000.

Bullet Formula:

What you did

+

How you did it

+

The impact

#7

Share Your Story



The next step is to experiment with sharing your story. Your story is the secret sauce that will help you accelerate the time to making a transition and getting others to help on your behalf.

Why do stories matter? Consider the following:

- “Stories are twenty-two times more memorable than facts” (Jennifer Aaker, Professor of Marketing, Stanford GSB)
- Stories connect us with people: “Stories are an effective way to transmit important information and values from one individual or community to the next.” (Paul Zak, Professor of Economics, Neurology, Psychology and Management, Claremont Graduate University)
- When an effective story is told to another person, you can see similar parts of the brain be activated in both the storyteller and the recipient, building a strong bond.

Research also shows that the most effective stories:

- ✓ **Grab our attention:** They activate a cortisol response by being unique and different. This is why no one is excited when they hear “I’m an accountant.”
- ✓ **Activate our empathy.** They active an oxytocin response, bonding us with another person.

In conclusion, in terms of a career transition, a good story will:

#1 Capture attention and help you stand out

#2 Transport someone into your world and shape how they see you

#3 Compel others to action

#4 Change as your career evolves

Building on the exercise in the previous section, you want to focus on your strengths and start communicating a story to answer three questions:

1. What unique “gifts” or strengths do you have to offer?
2. Where are you going?
3. What is energizing you now?

A bad example is this:

I'm an accountant and I need a new job

A better example is this:

Right now, I'm working at an accounting firm and doing quite well. I love the work I am doing analyzing data, but my goal is to work for a company that is excited about making bold decisions to use digital solutions to solve analytical problems. My short-term plan is to transition to an analytical role at a growing startup and in the meantime, I'm teaching myself about data analytics and disruption by taking a couple of online courses and reading a book by Clay Christensen.

Why is this effective?

The person knows where they want to go, and they signal that they are trying to get there by being personally motivated and interested in the topic AND are taking action.

It also makes others want to *help them* make this transition. You'll be shocked at how many offers start coming your way once you start sharing a story that is unique, authentic and filled with passion.

Taking Advantage of LinkedIn

When I graduated college, no one really used LinkedIn. When I was trying to network with alums from my school, I had to search an archaic directory without updated information.

Now? We have almost unlimited access to people across the globe. Yet, we don't share our story or connect with people because we are not sure what to talk about. Hopefully since you've made it this far, you are ready to take advantage of one of the best career resources on earth: LinkedIn

Once, my cousin was trying to track someone down on LinkedIn, so his team could recruit and hire him. Unfortunately, this person didn't have any contact information on his profile. People are literally trying to hire this man and he is making it difficult to do so!

Now my cousin will probably track him down, but the point is that people are looking for you. Having been on the recruiter's side of the table, finding good AND passionate people is harder than it would seem.

When I see full LinkedIn profiles, it helps tremendously. It tells me three things:

- *This person has spent time reflecting on who they are*
- *This person has a story*
- *The person is interested in new opportunities (most engaged people are)*

In terms of developing a strong LinkedIn profile, there are a few basics. First, if you are concerned about your employer seeing that you updated your profile, make sure you turn off the "notify your network" feature. This will avoid any awkward moments with your boss when you do a complete overhaul of your profile.

Notify your network?

No, do not publish an update to my network about my profile changes.



My personal stance is to update everyone. If your employer is uncomfortable with you trying to maximize your value, connect with others or share your story, they likely don't understand today's realities of the working world and hey, you are trying to make a career transition anyway, right??

Next, you want to nail the basics. There are three no-brainers:

No Brainer #1: Put up a photo!

I've had people tell me they are looking for a job and I will pull up their LinkedIn profile. In one case, she didn't even have a photo or updated work information. I asked her, "you really aren't serious about looking for a job, are you?" She got the point.

Put up a photo—a professional looking one. It's table stakes.

No Brainer #2: Update your Headline

Next, you'll want to update your headline. This is a way to quickly tell your "story." Are you a data analytics whiz that loves making telling stories with data? Maybe you could say something like this:

"Data Whiz | Storyteller | Making sense of Complexity"

This gives me the sense that this person loves what they do and has a strong understanding of the value they bring to any company. If you are looking for something a little less fluffy, maybe you go with something more specific and explicit.

Building Amazing Websites for Startups

Pick something that will resonate, and you feel confident about.

No Brainer #3: Update your Overview

This is the section where you explain your story. This is a chance to be creative or to just explain what you are currently working on. There are many ways to approach this:

SIMPLE: Bill Gates has the following overview:

Co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Microsoft Co-founder. Voracious reader. Avid traveler. Active blogger. Straight and to the point with a dose of some of his personal interests.

AUTHENTIC/STORY: Here is one I love from Shaquille O'Neal

During 19 seasons in the National Basketball League, I drove success on and off the court. I developed partnerships with global brands, pursued my academic interests in business and leadership and became the only current or former NBA player to hold three degrees: a bachelor's, a master's and a doctorate.

Basketball remains a big part of my life, whether it is providing NBA analysis on TV, serving as part-owner of the Sacramento Kings or appearing as a featured character in the latest video games. Since 1985, every NBA championship team has included a current or former teammate. I guess that makes me the Kevin Bacon of basketball.

Since retiring from the basketball court, I've expanded my brand relationships into one of the most diverse portfolios in the business world. As an early adopter of technology, I've identified innovative organizations as a serial tech investor. I work with brands that are household names such as Turner Networks, Reebok, IcyHot, AT&T and many other great companies. I also bring my business acumen to like-minded companies as a featured speaker at conferences and events nationwide.

Though I'm best known for basketball and business, my interests have always varied. I've released four studio albums and served as a sworn reserve officer in several law enforcement agencies across the country. I've collaborated on everything from fashion lines and jewelry to best-selling beverages and foods; from the latest technology products and games to children's books.

I really like his overview. We only think of Shaq in terms of his NBA career, but he tells his story in a way that brings him alive, shows how he has much bigger interests besides basketball and is still energized in his life.

Here are some things that stand out

1. He frames himself as human "on and off the court"
2. Shares an interesting fact that you didn't expect (has been teammates with someone on every title team since 1985)
3. What he has been up to since he stopped playing basketball (tech investing, speaking, brand partnerships)
4. A wide range of other interests and accomplishments in the last paragraph show he has almost unlimited interests and curiosity.

While he may not be easy to get ahold of, wouldn't you love to grab a beer or coffee with him??

PASSION STATEMENT: Another thing that can resonate well is sharing what you are passionate about. For example, I share the following line in my overview:

This has evolved into a clear mission for me: I want to make the working world a better place.

I have lost track of how many people have referenced this line either in person or via e-mail over the years.

#8

Tailor Your Story

This step is nothing more than putting together your resume and cover letter (if you haven't already).



We've identified your strengths, crafted your story and have started to test putting that story into the world.

"This is great" you are thinking "but how does it work for a specific job?"

Glad you asked.

To make your story work for a specific role or company you want to make sure that you are showing your strengths, but you also want to make sure you are communicating a message that resonates with that company.

This can be trickier than you would expect. You may think that telling someone you are a "problem solver" would resonate well but you may be working at a company that uses a different framing, such as "opportunities." Hence, it's imperative you learn as much about the companies and/or industries which you are targeting before tailoring your story.

COACHING EXAMPLE: FROM MATH TEACHER TO CONSULTANT

I worked with a 6th-grade math teacher who was interviewing at a top consulting firm. He was struggling to see how anything he did as a teacher would be relevant to a consulting firm.

After some reflection and going through the strengths exercise, we realized that putting together a lesson plan for 6th graders every day was hard and something he was good at. It involved taking complex topics and breaking them down into simple ideas that a 6th grader would understand.

Well, what do consultants do? Pretty much the same thing. They break down complex business problems, but their audience is different: senior executives and CEOs.

The challenging part was to use language that would resonate with someone working in consulting. A consultant reviewing his resume would

agree that teaching is a challenging and demanding job but might have a hard time picturing how a teacher can transition directly to analyzing business issues.

His results from the strengths activity were as follows:

STRENGTHS IN TEACHING ROLE

- Developing lesson plans to teach others
- Dealing with uncertainty and adjusting to student strengths and weaknesses
- Being humble and having to continuously learn from mistakes

STRENGTHS, SIMPLIFIED

- Developing lesson plans for complex topics
- Adaptable and open
- Learning orientation

The next step was to look at what the role at the consulting firm required:

1. Analytical and research skills
2. Developing senior level presentations
3. Fast-paced learning of new industries and problems

Next, he mapped each of the simplified strengths to each of the requirements and found that there was a lot of overlap.

The next step was to bring the connections to life in the form of written out stories that could be used in informational interviews or interviews so that he could communicate his strengths while also having it make sense in the context of a consulting firm

TAILORED STORY:

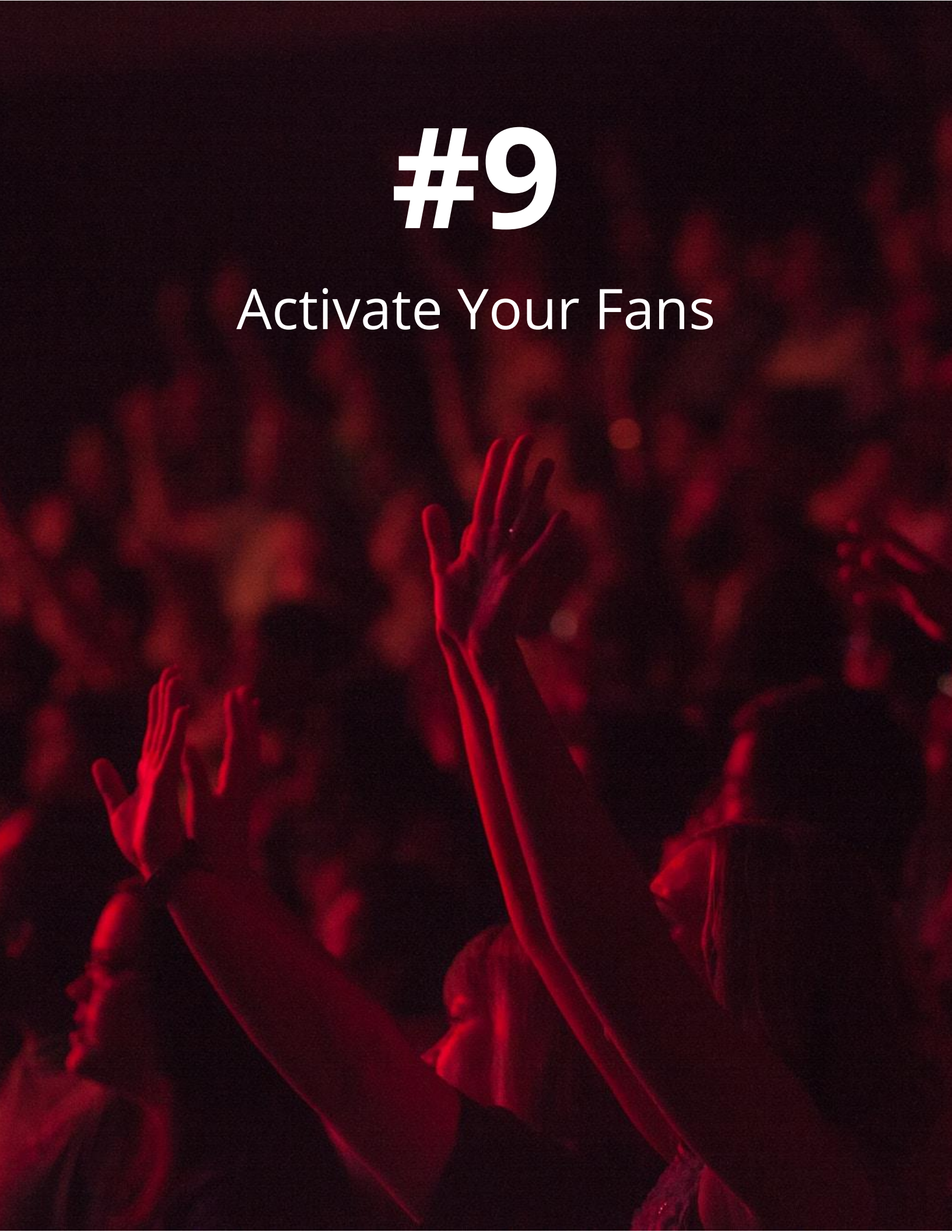
1. If I can explain complex topics to 6th graders, I will be able to explain complex problems to CEOs and senior executives.
2. I am very empathetic to other abilities and working styles and can tailor my approach to achieve the goal. This will be useful for clients that have different perspectives.
3. My ability to learn at a fast pace and be humble in a challenging environment will serve me well as I am exposed to new industries and problems.

He reiterated these points over and over during the interview process and was able to clearly demonstrate that making the jump from a school to a consulting firm was going to be seamless.

Oh, year...he got the job!

#9

Activate Your Fans



Once you have some form of a “story,” you need to start putting it into action. This means telling everyone and anyone who will listen.

People often underestimate the size of their personal networks and do not use it to their advantage.

Consider this thought experiment:

Think about all the good relationships you have: friends, former colleagues, and acquaintances. You are probably picturing at least 100 people – hopefully even more.

Now imagine that all those people have the same number of strong supporters. Those people are still closely connected to you and are probably willing to help you with after a quick introduction.

The problem? 99% of these people have no idea what you are looking for!

Here are four ways to activate the hidden supporters in the world:

#1 Tell friends and acquaintances

Don't keep it a secret that you are trying to make a career transition. When people ask how you are, don't say “busy” or “good.” Tell them “Things are great, I'm in the process of making a career transition and it's exciting.”

Of course, use discretion on who you tell, but you may never know who could help you. I had a friend tell me she was looking for a job via text and that night I ran into a friend that was looking to hire someone. She ended up hiring her two months later. True story! If she had never told me, I would not have been able to make that connection.

#2 Send an email to your friends (free script included)

I've received a handful of e-mails like the following and it always makes me think about them whenever I hear about opportunities. Very few people do something like this – we pretend like it's still 1990 and we need to wait for the newspaper to see job opportunities in the classifieds. Why not let your closest allies know what you are trying to achieve?

Here is a template:

Dear Friends,

You may not know, but I am currently in the process of making a career transition. After some serious reflection, I've realized that I love doing _____ and am going to transition to _____. My ideal location would be to work in _____ but I am open to ____ and _____. Some companies that have excited me are _____ and _____.

I am in the process of connecting with people in this area and would love to connect with anyone you think I should meet, let me know! I've attached my resume for your convenience.

Thanks!

Why will this work? To start, most people probably have no idea what your career goals are.

When's the last time you had a major discussion about your dream job with a group of random friends?

Third, it works because it is a clear ask. You are giving them a clear reason to introduce you to other people.

#3 Don't forget to tell your relatives

Your relatives are genetically biased to helping you succeed.

If you aren't at least letting them know what you are trying to accomplish, you are missing out.

Who knows what mom's best friend from college is doing these days.

When I was in college, I was trying to break into strategy consulting. I was scared to share this dream with people for a couple reasons. First, many people told me that I had no chance because the firms I was targeting didn't recruit at my school. Second, I was afraid I would fail and would be embarrassed (I did fail, but it wasn't a big deal — read on to see why).

However, I'm glad I did. I let my aunt know what I was trying to do and she connected me with her college roommate's husband. After talking to me on the phone, he had the office bring me in for an interview.

I didn't land the job, but I would never have gotten that opportunity had I kept it to myself.

#4 Passion conversations

Most people want to follow the conventional route. Reaching out to recruiters, applying for jobs online. However, if you are clear on what you are passionate about and have identified business leaders or companies you are excited about, try to be creative about reaching out directly to the people doing the work. You could try an e-mail like this:

Hi XXX,

I loved reading a recent blog post you wrote about XXXXXX. I share a similar passion for this industry. I am reaching out to see if you would be open to a conversation about the industry. I am not

looking for a job and have no expectations other than to learn from someone who is passionate, and I have looked up to.

Would you be open to a conversation in the next week?

This approach is inspired by Brian Grazer's book *A Curious Mind*, where he shares his idea of having "curiosity conversations" into his life. Early in his career he started reaching out to very successful and senior people and would ask for time to learn from them. He would make it clear that he was expecting nothing, and he just wanted to learn.

What made him stand out was that he meant it. Too often, we look at networking as something that is a transaction. Make it human and you will see the unexpected opportunity created out of thin air.

#10

Apply, Get Rejected &
Stay Resilient



You may be surprised that applying for jobs is step #10, but many people find that jobs tend to “find them” as they start sharing their story.

However, good old online applications still work. However, many people are still scared of rejection. I often hear people tell me, “I don’t think I have the qualifications for this.”

I call these *false pre-rejections*

People go through the mental imagination process of being rejected from a job they haven’t even applied for. The one thing that can overcome mental gymnastics is ACTION.

BJ Fogg, a psychologist at Stanford has done extensive work showing that setting small goals and building confidence in “early wins” can help build momentum towards larger goals.

Focus on process, rather than outcomes. Pick a simple goal like *“apply or make a connection to one job per week.”*

Apply for multiple jobs

Unless you are trying to become Secretary of State and there is only one position open, apply for multiple jobs. Many people can get hung up on landing a job at a single company they are interested in. This sole focus can be a strength—it lets you focus your efforts. However, you may be missing out on many more opportunities that you never even thought about.

Set up job alerts

I am often surprised at how few people set up job alerts. On LinkedIn, you can set up to ten searches that will e-mail results to you weekly or daily. This can be a good trigger to keep reminding you to look. Don’t forget about checking other job boards like clubs, alumni boards and others like Glassdoor.com, Google Job Search, SimplyHired.com, and Indeed.com.

I thought it fitting to close with a story

“Unfortunately, we regret that we are unable to extend an interview to you at this time”

I had only learned about consulting two months before receiving this form e-mail and being rejected by McKinsey & Company (the first time). In the middle of my summer internship, my manager started telling me about consulting. That night I went home and lost several hours reading anything I could find about the consulting industry. I was filled with excitement. Getting to learn about different topics in a fast-paced way surrounded by great people? I knew this is what I wanted to do.

At the time, I had no idea how much time students at schools like Harvard, and Stanford had spent preparing just to get an interview. One friend who I later met at McKinsey told me he knew he wanted to work in consulting as a senior high school!

Given that none of my friends knew anything about consulting—I was preparing by practicing case studies in the mirror. When it came time to apply, I chose the brute force method. I found Vault’s Top 100 list of the best consulting firms and applied to every single one.

100+ rejections later, I ended up going back to work at GE, where I had interned. I had underestimated how much work and preparation it took.

I saved the full rejection letter I got in 2006:

October 2006

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your interest in McKinsey & Company and your patience in awaiting our reply.

Unfortunately, we regret that we are unable to extend an interview to you at this time. Our team's decision was a difficult one given the strength of our applicant pool and the limited number of positions available. In the event that our hiring needs change, we will get in touch with you directly

On behalf of McKinsey & Company's recruiting team, we wish you every success in your career.

All the best,

XXX

Recruiting Manager

McKinsey & Company

Rejection sucked—but it only added fuel to my fire. I didn't see the rejection as an indication of my abilities, only as an obstacle to overcome. I kept reading and learning more about consulting and after working at my first job for almost a year, I started re-applying.

One day I was browsing jobs at my apartment when I stumbled upon a Manufacturing Research Analyst role on monster.com of all places (yes, really). As I read the job description I got more and more excited—I had a lot of the experience they were looking for from my time working in manufacturing in college. Holy crap, did they write this for me?

Later, I would find out that I had another moment of luck. The analyst who was hiring her replacement had recently been doing in-depth research on GE's Six Sigma program when she came across my resume. Over the past year, I had volunteered for multiple Six Sigma projects knowing that this might eventually help me land a job at a consulting firm.

Four months later, I walked into the McKinsey office and my life would never be the same.

Thank you!

Really! I am so grateful for people who put time into thinking about what drives them and motivates them. I believe the more people we can “awaken” to do work that matters to them, the better our working world, world, and communities will be.

Pay What Feels Right

I offer this e-book as a gift to you. I am passionate about helping as many people as I can find work that matters to them. I only ask that you consider supporting my work so that I can create more meaningful content like this. I try to embrace a “gift economy” approach, where your support goes towards supporting my life and mission, rather than as a transaction for a product or service.

I ask you to consider three questions:

1. How much can you offer that will support my material needs and ability to continue to do this work?
2. What makes sense to contribute to support community where people help and look to add value to each other as we move towards the future of work?

Pay what feels right => [Click Here](#)

If you are not able to offer anything, please just share this with someone who might find it valuable. Thank you!

BOUNDLESS

helping you navigate the future of work

To stay updated when more tools, podcasts, articles, and playbooks are released – subscribe => [Click here](#)

Paul is passionate about helping people navigate the future of work. To see more of his writing, check out Boundless

[Coaching](#) • [Consulting](#) • [Podcast](#) • [Writing](#)

Comments, feedback, questions?

paul@think-boundless.com