

# Accelerate your Career GPS into Top Gear

Valerie Naidoo

**Engaging in careers that allow people to follow their passion while getting paid for doing what they are amazingly good at doing is the way forward; however this appears to be riddled by a bone of contention. The dream career vs. paying mortgage debate has been raging to an all time climax! How are people supposed to create their career hall marks, embrace their passions and dreams when they still need to hold down a job to meet the pressure of everyday life?**

At the age of 23 I left home to take up life in the city of gold (Johannesburg) with just one suitcase, 2 years later I decided to leave South Africa to navigate the landscape of the United Kingdom with very little understanding of the English culture. My Career GPS had led me to many different paths, some were adventurous and some were challenging. After several attempts of fine tuning the coordinates on my Career GPS, I now live every single day of my life following my dreams surrounded by the people I love and in an environment that supports me. The self deception of modern age is the popular belief that only after a person has spent the last 35- 40 years of his or her life working really hard, putting in 70 hour work weeks, he or she qualifies to have carte blanche to live out their dreams, explore the Serengeti or take up life as an expat in Thailand. Let it be known, that this sentiment which has been endorsed in the work- life culture for the last 5 decades is fast fading.

According to most recent data from the bureau of labor stats in the US, an employer stays at his or her job for an average of 4.4 years, undergoes about 3-5 different careers in his life time and holds an average of 10 different jobs in his career lifespan. Although some of this career transitioning stems from the uncertainty in the economy, but with the rapture of both the X & millennial generation, a new order is being called in. They reject tradition in the workplace by choosing not to follow in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents who faithfully stayed at the same company for over 25 years, worked long hours and spent very little quality time with their families; instead they crave a work culture that puts the emphasis on a quality lifestyle. They choose a career platform that allows them to engage in their talents and passions, a world of e-zines and smart phones whilst embracing the Zen culture so that they can perform at their best levels. More and more people are choosing to embrace life by being their best and delivering their most remarkable performance in the now. They are reaching a culmination in their levels of thinking, urging them to live and enjoy life in the present instead of waiting for the next 20 years to do so. I suppose in some way this ties in with what **Steve Jobs had said about doing great work to be your best and loving what you do.**

**What motivates you to get out of bed for work each morning?** Your 25 year mortgage, the kids education or maybe just to make ends meet. Putting on that career life vest while experiencing the Sunday afternoon blues (Saturday afternoon blues for our friends in the Middle East) to help you get through the working week sounds all too familiar. Most of us have gone through that phase of coasting through our careers for months on end and then one day to awaken to the realization that the last 3 years have just

passed us by. When I worked in London, I recall one of my colleagues saying to me on a Monday afternoon that she wished it was Friday already! Granted, that the UK has the longest number of working hours in Europe with the greater proportion of employees working more than 48 hours per week, but this is a dismal approach to life. Most people just get by the working week and only come to life in the evenings or during the weekends and then there are others who work so hard during the week day that they end up sleeping the weekend away.

What if you could enjoy your work, if you were incredibly good at what you did and got paid handsomely for it? By embracing a career that comes naturally to you or one that you immensely enjoy, you stand a chance of aligning all areas of your life. If for example, polar bears were moved from the North Pole to the Antarctica, what do you think would happen? The female polar bears prefer snow banks to frozen ice and land (most of Antarctica is actually land covered in snow). The polar bear might make the transition but would it continue to thrive in a habitat not so natural to it without experiencing some degrees of difficulty? In a similar vein, if you love working with computers and speak the programming language as if it was your native tongue and you found yourself working as an accountant because it is what your father had wanted you to do, you will experience that trapped career crisis that some experience in their 40s and 50s. If only you could reprogram your genetic code, who would you be if you were totally free in every part of your life? Your talents and natural self expression will allow you to defy self imposed limitations. There will be no need to take a vacation from work because you will be pursuing work/ projects that you love and the best part is you get paid for it.

## **Ways to rewire your Career GPS**

- Time for you to start using your own career GPS, not one borrowed from your uncle or granddad! Punch in the coordinates so that it takes you to your desired destination.
- Rewire your mindset and set the scope to unleash your creative capacity.
- Re-connect with the child within you. As a child you knew personal greatness, you also acted without fear and knew no limitations, as an adult you became blinded by social conditioning, negativity and layers of conformity.
- Innovate your options, if you seek to create success and opportunities by focusing on how to be resourceful instead of the problem, you will surely find solutions.
- Take a day or two to create two lists. The first list should hold the things and aspects that jump right out at you. For example; I have a friend whose eyes light up every time she talks about fashion and she literally comes to life when she pages through a fashion magazine. Use details to include your interests, passions, strengths and talents. Your second list should include what you will require to be able to reach your dream job. For example; you might secretly be a social media guru and you know a lot about the different functionalities of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Google + and LinkedIn etc. Marketing & Public Relations come naturally to you, and social media consultancy is calling out your name, however you lack a qualification in social media. So you would try to bridge this gap by obtaining a qualification in social media.
- Be realistic. You still need to foot the bills such as, rent, transport, food, etc. I recommend creating a budget, eliminate items of luxury, sell unwanted items and find ways of saving money (such as cycling to work instead of using your car or public transport). Hold onto your current job while completing your qualification and executing the rest of your plan.

- Your current job might not hold the best of working conditions or maybe you hate your boss but try engaging in your work. By focusing on doing a good job and on the possibilities of success, you will spend less energy and time on reasons for not liking your job.
- Adjust your attitude and you will create the space to improve your current work situation (your boss might end up being good to you and treating you with the respect you deserve).
- Once you are a certified social media consultant, I recommend getting a part time job in your field while remain in full time employment with your current employer.
- Start building your reputation as an expert in your field and after you've reached this status, you can negotiate part time hours at work until you are fully financially functional to offer your services on a full time scale.
- Surround yourself with a positive circle of influence; needless to say avoid those who will throw cold water on your dreams.

**Don't bail out on your talents, dreams and passions because you have to hold down a job to pay the bills. There are always options and ways of elevating to the top of career Everest; it depends on how you choose to embrace your options.**