

The **ABCs** of Career Success!

STUDENT EDITION

(a **FUN** picture book for
a **SERIOUS** topic!)

REVIEW: “*One of the best mini e-books
in the world*” - said no one, ever

INCLUDES: zero B.S. (just the
unadulterated essentials)

By Dawid Wiącek | The Career Fixer



Action!

Honestly, you're probably better off putting this book down and getting real stuff done.

If you're struggling with landing job interviews, or unsure about what your career should be... then why waste your precious life reading a book?

Get out there! Ask for help. Network. Talk to folks in different companies, different industries. Talk to parents of friends. Ask your teachers / professors for advice. Talk to the school counselor or academic advisor, especially if you've been avoiding them for some time. They're here for you. They want you to thrive.

Maybe take a free online course. Go volunteer (online volunteering is a thing, so no excuses if you're an indoor animal). Do something—anything!

The point is, rather than reading yet another article or book about career best practices blah blah blah, you're better off moving, doing. **Action** will teach you more than any book ever can. You'll try out new things and learn what works for you. Life is an experiment with infinite possibilities, not an exam with true or false answers.



My smile here is
not fake.

I legitimately love
helping people find
more fulfilling, better-
paying careers.

Branding

What makes you, you? Why should others care? Did you get decent grades and coast your way through school, or did you go the extra mile, above and beyond, with your academic and extensive extracurricular activities?

Branding is not just for marketers and social media influencers. If you're a human being who wants something (like a job), ask yourself the following question:

When people look at my resume, does it look average or amazing? When they see my LinkedIn profile, is it bland or engaging? What impression do they get of me? Is my story exciting, memorable, and relevant to what they want or need? Why should an employer hire me?

You can check out my [LinkedIn profile](#) to see what I mean. Your branded documents—resume, social media, cover letter, etc.—have got to tell a simple but compelling story. You've got to stand out.

Sure, it's difficult to write about yourself. But deep down you know you're good at a few things (even if you haven't really shown the world). For example, you may be a talented artist, but your parents think art isn't a worthwhile career (yet they pay for movies and sit on furniture and read books or play games – all of which a talented artist had an important part in creating), so you hide your drawings from the world. And, in so doing, your **branding** suffers, because you're only showing a shadow of yourself to the world. Show us all the good stuff you're made of! Employers want to hire not just skilled and talented folks—they want to hire engaged and passionate people!



CV (or Conciseness)

Bonus points if you know what **CV** stands for.

In many countries outside the US, people use a long, multi-page curriculum vitae instead of a resume. In the US, certain academic and scientific industries prefer the CV, but in general, most people here use a resume. Why take five pages to make your case when you can do it in one or two?

Let's face it. Thanks to technology and social media, our attention spans are growing smaller all over the world, so shorter US-style resumes tend to work well around the world (there may be exceptions, of course).

Why do you think I created this mini e-book instead of a 300-page book? Because no one reads!

Keep your resume short and simple. Focus on results, not just responsibilities and tasks. Make it memorable.



Do's and Don'ts

Do's:

Keep an open mind. Reach out to old contacts, parents of friends, former professors, etc.. Reach out to brand new contacts. Try something new every day. Update the resume. Polish the LinkedIn profile. Scrub the social media accounts. Attend a relevant virtual conference in your target industry. Be kind. Volunteer. Donate. Exercise. Get good sleep. Recycle. Finally sew on that button. Learn when to say no. Find a mentor. Travel. Never stop learning. Read. Know when to stop reading (See: **Action**).

Don'ts:

Don't be an ass.



Elevator Pitch

As a job seeker (whether you're just graduating from college, or you have a ton of work experience) your elevator pitch is a short, sweet (and hopefully impressive) description of your value.

Do you have an elevator pitch? Is it impactful? Memorable?

Try to avoid formal and boring language. Even if you don't have any work experience yet, you can still create an **elevator pitch**.

Dull elevator pitch:

I enjoy reading and writing, and I would like to pursue a job as a copywriter or maybe a journalist.

Better elevator pitch:

I'm a ravenous reader. Ever since I was a little kid, I couldn't put down a newspaper until I had read every article. I love how a few well-chosen words in a headline or the first sentence of a novel can capture a reader's attention, and hold it for a long time. I enjoy hearing about stories from all around the world and would love to work at a company that values the power of storytelling as much as I do.



Facts

Sobering **facts**:

Up to 50% of Americans are unhappy with their jobs. Some of this has to do with the fact that many people make their career choices based on what other people (friends, parents, "society") tell them, instead of listening to their own brain and heart. Some people say "a job is a job" and doesn't need to be fun. And that's fine if they believe that. But wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone had a job they enjoyed? Wouldn't the quality of their work, and the frequency of innovation, skyrocket?

About 68% of women do not negotiate, versus 52% of men who don't. There are many reasons (and repercussions) for this gender gap.

Fun **facts**:

All worker bees are female.

A bee produces a teaspoon of honey (about 5 grams) in her lifetime. Next time you enjoy a spoonful of honey, stop, savor, and appreciate the lifetime of a female bee's hard work! (And if you're a vegan, bless you for being more enlightened than I am.)

The moral of this story is that you should own your worth and not be afraid to negotiate. Negotiation is a powerful business (and life) skill that shows you have a certain level of confidence and maturity. You may not always get exactly what you ask for, but often you'll be much closer to that than if you didn't speak up for yourself.

Fact: nothing beats strawberries in Poland (my motherland)



Grit

If you're human, chances are you have good days at school (or work), and you have bad days. That's normal...

But what if those bad spells last more than a few days? Are you someone who has suffered at the hands of a miserable job for more than a few months? I once had a client who was a lawyer for 20+ years and he admitted to me that he hated nearly all twenty of those years! But it's never too late, and we worked together to carve out a new career path for him. He began to see new possibilities.

On a good day, the job search can be draining and costly (even if just time-wise). All that research, finding the right job postings online, tailoring your resume and cover letter, hustling to get your foot in the door, sweating through interviews (in-person or virtual) and then there's the possibility of rejection... you know the drill.

Throughout it all, you've got to have **grit**. Resilience. Thick skin. Persistence. Otherwise, the job search can cause burnout. Make sure you're doing things every day to increase your level of resilience. How are you tending to your physical, mental and social health? If the answer is "I don't know" - then you've got work to do.



Honesty

You can lie to your boss, to your colleagues, to your teacher or professor to your friends. You can even lie to yourself for a short while, before it comes back to bite you in the arse.

Marshall Goldsmith (look him up) says “what got you here won’t get you there.” At some point you’ll have to be honest with the person in the mirror: yourself.

Why are you feeling stuck in your academic or professional career? If you’ve been unemployed for a long time, what else might be going on? Focusing on external factors is comforting in the short term (i.e., blaming others), but ultimately, it’s counterproductive. What useful and harmful decisions did you make to get you here?

But don’t wallow in the past. More importantly: What are you willing to do, what are you willing to sacrifice, to get yourself out of this mess? If you want to land a job (maybe your first job ever), or you want to pivot into a different career, tough choices will have to be made.

Honesty is necessary but it isn’t sufficient. You’ll need a plan. And you’ll need to act (see: **Action**).



Ire

That's right. Ire. Indignation. Anger.

Maybe something your teacher, coworker or boss did once upset you and now you hold a major grudge. And it affects your self-worth, morale, and performance in school or at work.

Are you thriving at school or work? If not, when was the last time you flourished?

Don't let that anger go to waste, though. Sure, you can hold a grudge forever, but that doesn't benefit anyone--it only hurts you. Think of every Disney movie you've ever seen: How can you channel that **ire** or pain into something productive?

Who are your sources of inspiration? Whether they're family members or famous people you've never met, chance are they have all experience moments of weakness or pain or anger, but they dusted themselves off and kept going. Let their resilience inspire you to do the same.



Joy

Some people treat life as a game, with winners and losers. Elon Musk himself said... well, let's forget about him. This is about you.

If the concept of life as a game is too scary or just doesn't sit well with your conscience, think of it in terms of pleasure. Leisure. Rest.

I'm an immigrant, and culturally I was raised to see work as just a means to an end, a way to earn a paycheck. Pay the bills. Survive.

But as I grew older and rubbed elbows with professionals from all walks of life (6 continents, every industry imaginable), I learned that work can be a source of **joy**.

I'm not saying every day will be a cakewalk--every job has aspects of it that can stink a little--but it is possible that your profession doesn't drain your soul daily and make you shudder as you lay your head down to sleep.

Have you ever been jealous of people who say they don't feel like they're working because their job is so fun? I was jealous, once. Well, I'm finally at a place where I no longer envy others. It took a few misses, dead-end turns, and some tears. But I got there.

Do you want to get there? Do you believe you deserve fulfillment and happiness? My hope is that you do. But it's not up to me.



Karma

Karma is a Sanskrit word that literally translates to “action” or “deed.”

Certain thoughts beget certain actions. If you do good, some good will come back to you, like a boomerang.

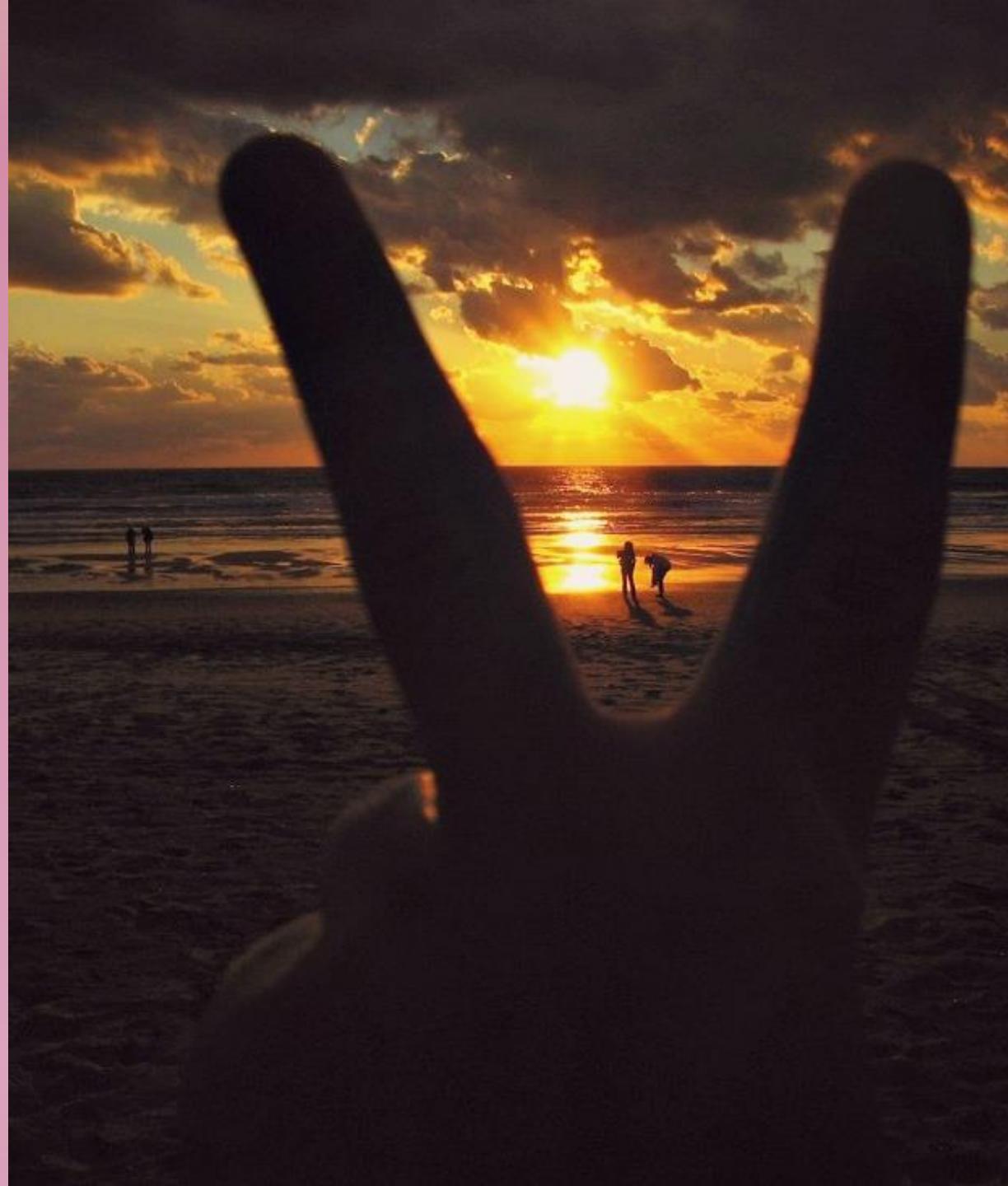
When you’re unemployed, or stuck in a career rut, are you someone who turns to complaining and blaming others, or doing nothing and ignoring it all?

Or are you perhaps someone who--despite their own unemployment or unpleasant job--still seeks to help others and see the good in the world?

Volunteering may sound like the last thing an unemployed, exhausted person wants to do, but many of my clients have found that volunteering is precisely what gets them unstuck. It gives them purpose, energy, and fulfillment. I’ve had clients who have landed job interviews by networking (casually, organically) with fellow volunteers. It’s a low-stress and fun way to network.

And no matter where you are in your career (happy, rich, fulfilled or miserable and underpaid), please take care of your network. Find a mentor. Request informational interviews. Request recommendations (or maybe even write one for your professor or boss). If you hear of job openings, share them with your circles.

If you’re mean and self-centered, **karma** can sabotage your career. If you’re good and you believe in abundance, the universe will likely be kinder to you. Ask yourself: am I doing enough good in the world? What role would I be playing in a Disney movie: the hero or the villain, or a forgettable extra in the background?



Learning

Not everyone needs (or wants) to switch careers, earn promotions, move to a new city, etc.

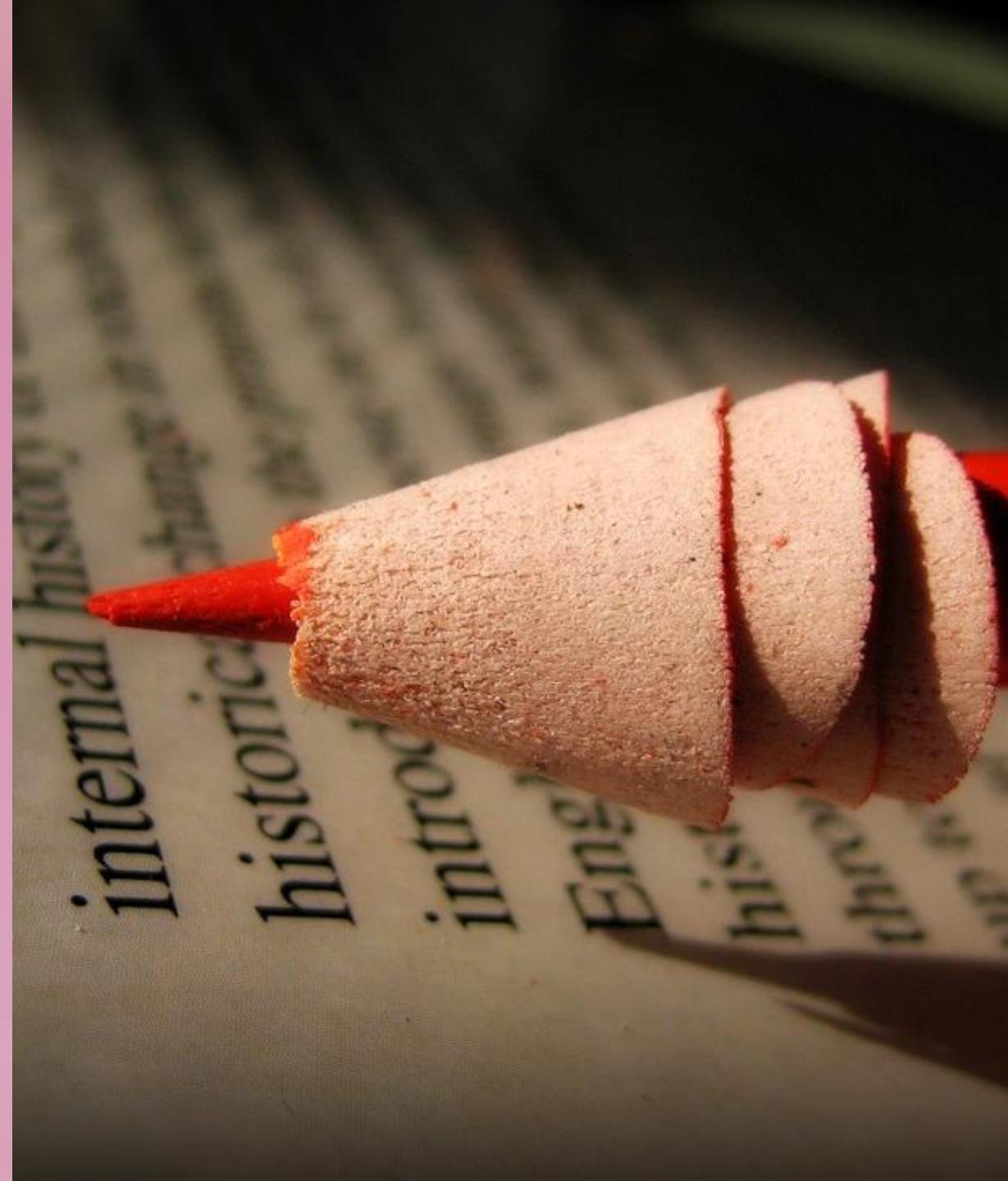
But because we spend so many waking hours of our lives at work, most of us want to be intellectually stimulated, challenged, or engaged at our jobs. So many people are not, unfortunately.

Is that you? Are you in cruise mode, doing the bare minimum just to get by? Are you painfully bored?

My challenge to you is this: what have you learned from your mistakes at school or work in the last year? More importantly, what have you learned outside of school or work in the last 12 months?

Have you taken up a new hobby or skill? Completed an online certificate course in a new area? Rekindled your love with a talent (or curiosity) you had as a youth but have all but abandoned?

If you haven't done any intensive **learning** in the last 12 months, why have you let an entire year pass by? The best way to feel old is by stopping to learn. Do you want to feel old? There was a 101-year-old yoga instructor teaching at a studio a block from my home. Ponder that for a moment...



Mobilization

"Motivation" is just so overplayed a word.

If you're not motivated, is a little e-book going to get you there?

I doubt it. But feel free to prove me wrong.

As I get older (and lazier a.k.a. "more time-efficient"), I have tended to think about it in terms of mobilization.

Chances are that you have some internal desire (motivation), whether you crave your first full-time job, or you want a more fulfilling job, a higher salary, a bigger intellectual challenge perhaps... so if you're not going after it, why not? Really, what's keeping you? Fear? Laziness? Netflix?

I think of **mobilization** as the moment you stop thinking and start doing (See: Action, Karma). You may need the support from your social circles, but if your friends are not up to the task, consider talking to your academic advisor or finding a career coach--someone who can provide not just support but also give you a kick in the rear, hold you accountable when the tough gets tougher... because it likely will.

So, what's it's going to be? Are you going to keep reading, or are you going to get started with the next chapter of your professional journey? Up to you.



Nixing

Nixing means putting an end to or cancelling something.

Do you find it hard to say "no"? Are you spreading yourself too thin at school, work or at home? Are you taking on too much administrative, logistical, financial, or emotional baggage?

I often work with seasoned professionals (VPs, CEO's) who are already operating at a high level but want to go further...

This often requires sacrifice, sometimes short-term, sometimes for the long haul... if you're looking to find a job quickly... are you willing to spend a few weeks networking vs. chilling on the sofa and Netflixing? It requires **nixing** the things that don't add value to your personal and especially your professional life.

How important is that next step to you? Maybe it's not important. Maybe your spouse, friends and family expect you to want something, but you actually don't want that thing.

If it's important to you, prove it to yourself.

Reach out for help. Take action. Try new things.



Outlook

Nope, not the Microsoft email program.

Outlook. Mindset. Your view of yourself and the world.

Probably the singular most important aspect of your job search or career development journey.

Of the hundreds of people whom I've coached over the years, of the thousands of resumes and CVs I have reviewed (10,000+ by one rough estimate), the one thing that separates the successful ones from the not-so-successful ones is personal **outlook**.

Do you see yourself as the victim of a lousy academic or professional career, or someone who takes control over your professional narrative?

When you stumble during finals, and your grades dip, do you ruminate and spend days or weeks in a depressed mood, or do you get over it quickly, make adjustments, and move on?

Do you learn from it? (See: **Learning**).

If your personal outlook is lousy, why is that ok? If it's not ok, what are you doing to change it today and this week and next?

Are you stuck in your outlook because you're constantly surrounding yourself with the same limited-minded, hyper-needy, and negative people in your life? Or are you reaching out to people you admire to improve your outlook, expand your horizons, and better yourself?

"You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." - Jim Rohn



Perspiration

Whether you are naturally talented or not, the thing that can get you over a career plateau or hump is hard work (or at least smart work, which sometimes can be one and the same).

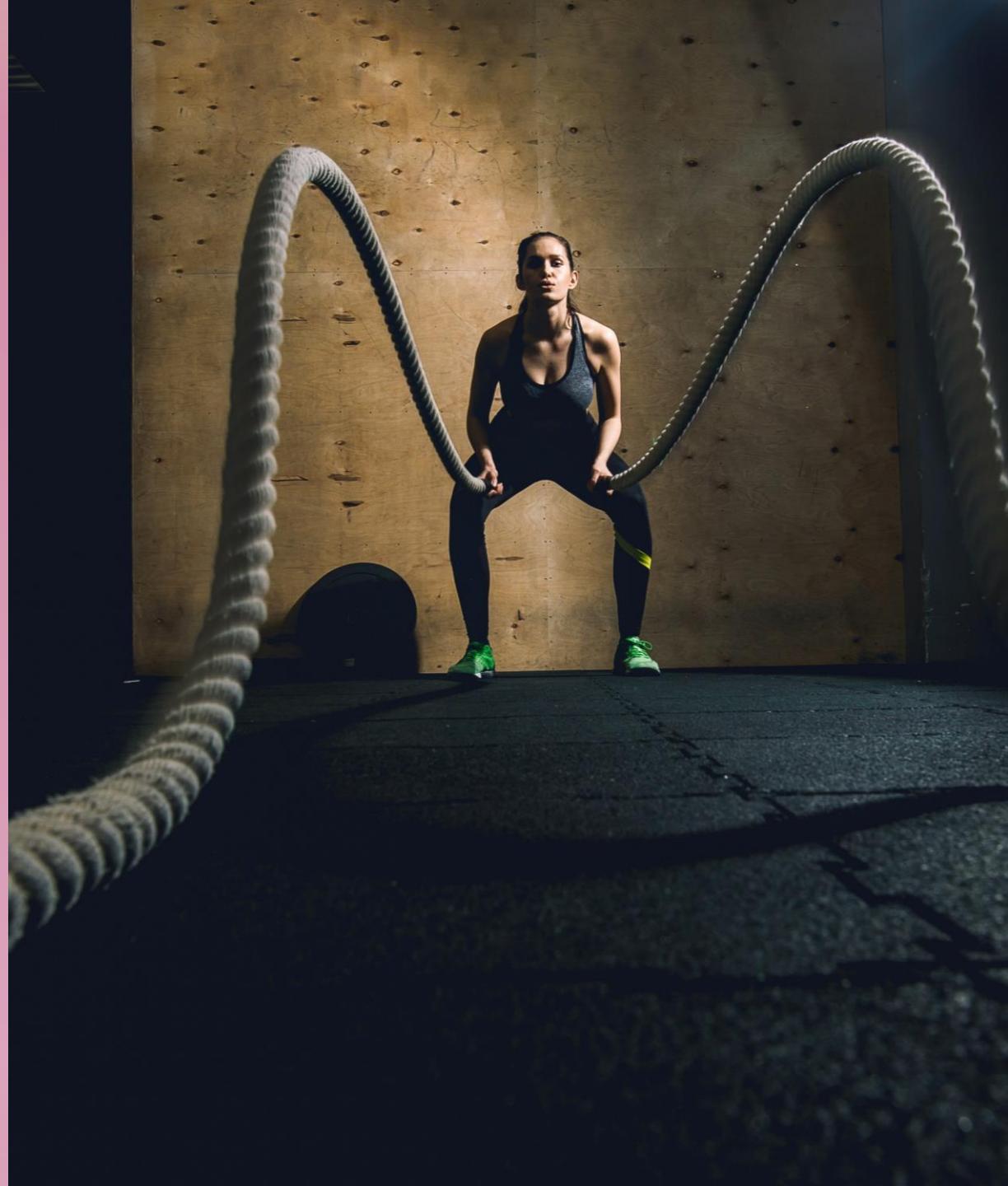
Persistence. Diligence. Call it what you will. When is the last time you worked really hard, you really engaged with your schoolwork or job? Or, if you're seeking a new job or career, when was the last time you really put in the effort to build new skills, practice your interviewing skills, and network like your life depended on it?

I get it, because I was (more than once) at a miserable job (and each time it was miserable for different reasons). At some point I said enough is enough. And I put a lot of work into taking some certifications, meeting new people, and applying to jobs outside of my comfort zone.

It's good to read. But is that all you're doing? Are you applying any of your lessons? Are you networking? Are you taking the time to customize your resume to each job? Are you posting highly engaging and relevant content on LinkedIn to attract recruiters?

If your goal is to become not just an employee but a leader, are you just daydreaming about it, or have you taken any concrete steps toward that end? If not, what's keeping you? Fear? Laziness? Ignorance? Confusion?

If you're still in a rut, assess your physical and mental health. Are you exercising regularly? Are you breaking a sweat? Are you working out solo, or are you building a network by exercising with a group? **Perspiration** can bring a lot of good to your mind, body, and professional network.



Questions

Question everything.

Everything you've read has been written by a human--a flawed, biased human. So take everything with a healthy grain of NaCl (salt).

Even experts get things wrong sometimes. But a true expert is someone who admits that they are fallible, and keeps posing questions. Keeps searching for truth.

Neuroscientists say that trying a new thing, like walking your dog via a different path, can help keep your brain sharp and can also make you feel like you're living longer. That's partly because a novel thing can slow the experience of the passage of time. Otherwise, you run the risk of going into auto-mode and not really paying attention.

Question what you read and hear from potential employers. They may paint an amazing picture of the company but do the research: talk to current and former employees. The reality might surprise you.

If you've been unemployed, underemployed, or unfulfilled at work for a long while, question why this is so. Is it entirely the fault of your family, friends, dog and marketplace dynamics—or, if we're being frank (See: **Honesty**) with ourselves, do you have more power than you think to improve your current situation?



Résumé

Yup, I went there, French accent marks and all.

But your resume doesn't have to be fancy. In fact, dirty little secret: it only needs to be good enough to get you in the door.

Sometimes a client tells me "I had a bunch of interviews, but I didn't get the job because my resume wasn't as strong as it could've been." I want to yell from the mountaintops: your resume doesn't land you the job, you do!

At best, a great resume will help you land a job interview. And then you need to wow them with your interview.

Even then, sometimes the most qualified candidate doesn't get the job, because they end up hiring internally, or the CEO's nephew gets the gig. C'est la vie.

All that said, if your resume isn't landing you any interviews, welcome to the black hole! What are you doing to dig yourself out? Ask a friend to read through your resume. Hire a **resume** writer. I know a few great ones.



Sabbaticals

Like a computer that's been on non-stop for a long time, sometimes you just need a hard reset...

Not everyone wants to (or can) take off a year (or even three months)... but perhaps you can afford to take a few weeks and do a mini-retreat... it can even be a staycation...

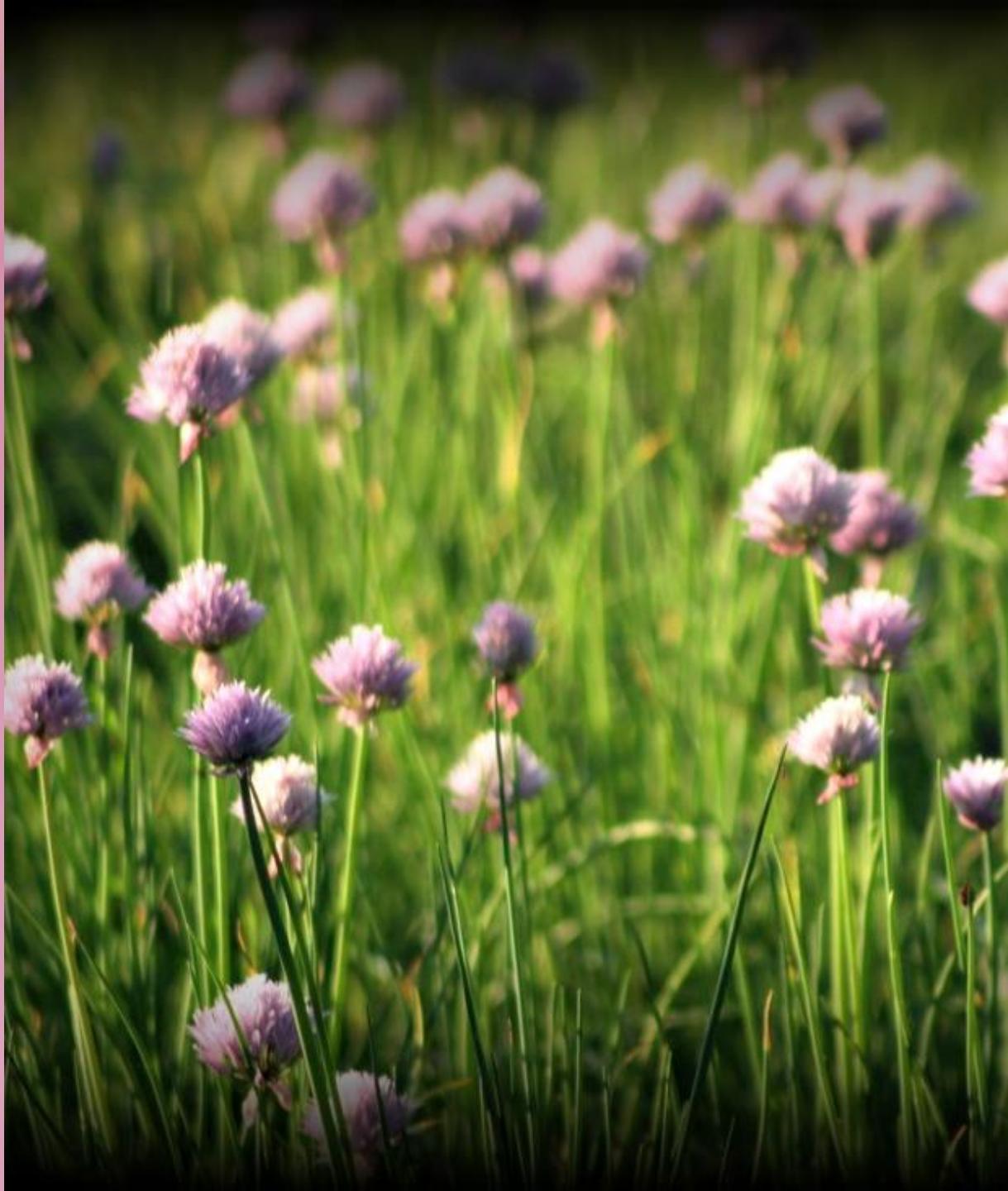
If you're still young and in school, you may not be needing a sabbatical quite yet, but sometimes in-between jobs people take a short break to focus on a new (or rekindled) hobby to reset the mind.

Like a crossword puzzle... sometimes your mind remembers and is sharpest when you step away from the problem.

And as much as I love my work, and adore my amazing clients, I do take time off to recharge those batteries. A few days off here and there, and sometimes longer vacations...

This way I can be my sharpest and most energetic self for my clients. You don't need to take a super-long **sabbatical**, but one day, sooner or later, you will likely need to take some time off to make sure your mind, body and soul are good.

Burnout is terrible. Try to avoid it.



Targeting

The "spray and pray" method of job searching is rarely, if ever, successful.

Given how highly specialized most job functions are these days, positioning yourself as a generalist is (usually) not going to cut it. Sorry to burst your bubble.

If a job posting requires 5+ years of experience, and you have only 1 year of full-time experience (or just a short internship, and nothing more), you might be better off not applying to that job and getting your hopes up.

Work hard to establish yourself as a specialist in a given field. Customize your resume (and LinkedIn, so there's consistency and it doesn't raise any flags) to align with **target** jobs. Find internships that align with your ideal career. Speak to people who work in that career already, to get their perspective on things. You don't know what you don't know. Sometimes talking to those folks will increase your level of excitement for that field, and other times it might make you question whether you wish to work in that industry at all. Neither decision is right or wrong, of course, but it's important to gather the intel so you can make an informed decision that is right for you.

If you're all over the place (e.g.. "I want to be a lawyer and a graphic designer and also a dancer and a fitness trainer on the side") I'm not here to dissuade you from your dreams. But I am here to tell you that it will be a long road ahead. What tends to work better is focusing on one thing at a time. Get some experience under your belt in thing X, become a specialist or expert in that thing, and then start adding thing Y or Z to your repertoire slowly.



Unity

"Shared sorrow is half sorrow; shared joy is double joy..."

Whether you're still a student, or you've started your first job, or you've decided to open a business, it can all sometimes feel like a lonely endeavor.

Rather than going at it alone, it's helpful to interact with others who have been in your exact shoes (or at least in similar footwear).

"There is strength in numbers." "It takes a village." Don't be afraid to reach out to other people. Whether it's a friend, a therapist, a work colleague, your HR manager, etc. Find someone you vibe with, to exchange ideas or just to vent, or laugh, or roll our eyes at some of the wild curve balls life throws your way.

Find your tribe. Surround yourself with some like-minded folks but, more importantly, find folks who may share some core values but will challenge your way of thinking (See **Outlook**). People whose business models or styles of management / leadership differ wildly from yours. You stand to learn the most from them, and them from you. Don't live your entire life in an echo-chamber with people who just believe exactly what you believe. It's so dull that way. Challenge yourself. Spice things up.

Find your community. There is strength in unity. Take a group exercise class. Network with your fellow perspirers (See **Perspiration**).

Some of my clients are not just dealing with challenging career problems...they're also dealing with family problems, health challenges, etc. Your community can help support you through the tough times, and you can return the favor when you're back on your feet.



Vanity

Vanity, vivacity, and verve.

On some level, you sort of have to already love yourself before you embark on a major career change, or even to demonstrate confidence during your first formal job interview.

It's all about self-worth.

As for vanity... I'm not saying you have to be arrogant.

But there is an element of tooting your own horn on your resume, during interviews, networking chats, and beyond.

I am an introvert (becoming more of an ambivert), and many of my introverted clients struggle with self-promotion. A little bit of **vanity** can't hurt. Below is a link to an article with some tips on networking for introverts, written by an introvert (me).

<https://westchestermagazine.com/life-style/business/networking-tips-for-introverts/>



Waves

Much like anything else in life (health, luck, the seasons), career success can also come in cyclical waves.

Are you thriving in a time of career prosperity and bounty?

Or have you been in a job rut for some time?

Is it time to get out of that rut, or are you really, really, really comfortable in that painful-yet-familiar coziness of your "sitch"?

No matter what your current circumstances are, please remember that you can always keep experimenting with your career, playing around, asking around, networking, building your network... so that the next time a new wave (opportunity) rolls along into your lap, you'll be more than ready.

Don't let your resume sit outdated, collecting dust in the nooks and crannies of your laptop... don't ignore your friends and professional network and only reach out when you need something--tend to them throughout your life and be generous always (See **Karma**).



X-factor

Honestly, I wrote this e-book just so I could have a page dedicated to "X is for xylophone"—since that's exactly what I remember from children's picture books.

But, since we're on the topic of X, how about X-factor?

Do you have a unique skill or experience that is unique to you? (See: Elevator pitch).

Do you get recognized by your professors or boss or coworkers for this thing?

Is this **X-factor** being communicated in your resume and LinkedIn? Are you bringing it up during your internship or job interviews?

Are your friends constantly telling you that you should follow your passion in thing X, but you keep making excuses?

Well, why aren't you doing it? What's stopping you, exactly?

What are your excuses? List them on a piece of paper and cross them out and post them in a high-visibility area of your home as a reminder. Or crush them and toss them and forget about them and continue the status quo. The choice is up to you.



Yes(terday)

Saying "Yes" to extra activities (requests from family and friends) and projects or tasks (demands from your professor or boss) out of a sense of guilt is not ideal. Saying yes to the little "busy work" can stand in the way of the bigger picture... your boss now expects you to do these things, you're enabling your boss to keep giving you more and more...

It's also an easy excuse, way too common: "I've put off my big life goal X because I'm constantly putting out fires at work, or I'm constantly running from one social engagement to another." Ok. What about it? What do you expect this little ebook to tell you that you don't already know? Be selective.

Say 'no' to what's holding you back (See **Nixing**). Demonstrate that you value your own time and know your worth. Show that you're a strong and formidable negotiator. There's something so attractive (to recruiters and prospective employers) about someone who knows their worth.

Saying no to the minutiae will allow you to say **Yes** to something new and bigger... that class you've been daydreaming about but putting off, that tough conversation you've been avoiding with your boss (or direct report, or spouse for that matter)... do it.

What you did yesterday got you to today, but if you want something drastically different in your life, you've got to change things up.

If you don't want your life to change, that is quite all right. No one is saying you need to change. But if you want your professional journey to improve, then, yes, you've got to do something different.



Zest!

Obviously, Z is for Zebra.

But it's also for Zest (See **Grit, Ire, Joy, Perspiration, X-factor**).

It's also for Zzz's. Make sure to get rest. Good sleep hygiene helps you perform better at work, at school, at home, during interviews, etc. Don't forget self-care. Just don't.

And if you are about to embark on a new career, may your path be a **zest-filled** adventure!

Z is the last letter in the English alphabet.

So, with that said, let's call it a day.

If you need help with your resume, LinkedIn, or overall career goals, don't hesitate to reach out (details on the last page).

Thank you for reading and have an empowered life!

Gratefully,



Dawid Wiacek



A few thoughts:

Reality check: there's a lot to digest in this little ebook, but not everything may resonate with you. Take everything with a healthy grain of NaCl (salt). And if you're still feeling stuck, don't go it alone. Ask for help. Reach out to a friend. Hire a career coach. Do something. Act.

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Questions?

You can book a free, zero-obligation, no-headache consultation via the website below. Or just email me. I'm happy to lend an ear and help wherever I am able. I'm an executive resume writer, recovering (i.e., former) HR professional, and certified career coach.

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Thanks for reading... and have an empowered life!

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