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Developing an Entrepreneurial aka More Empowered Mind-Set

KEY CONCEPT

YOU ARE YOUR OWN BUSINESS OF ONE!

The concept we use throughout the book is really quite simple. Essentially, it calls on you to approach your career-planning process with an entrepreneurial mind-set. I have chosen to call this concept “I Incorporated.” Actually, Tom Peters wrote about it several years ago in his book *Thriving on Chaos*, and there have been many authors recently who have discussed how individuals must take control of their careers and even potentially participate in a “free agent nation,” in the words of Daniel H. Pink. More recently, Reid Hoffman, cofounder and chair of LinkedIn, and Ben Casnocha wrote a book called *The Start-Up of You*, in which they describe some of the best practices of start-up ventures in Silicon Valley and how you might be able to apply those concepts to your own career.

The point is that the idea of being your own business has been around for a few years but has often been applied in environments where being a traditional entrepreneur was more expected and supported. Although we obviously continue to support and encourage those concepts, we want to take this idea and make it applicable to everyone who is in today’s job market. Whether you work for a large

company or a small one, or for the government or even in the nonprofit sector, you are in business for yourself. You are your own business of one, and we encourage you to embrace that concept and make it part of your fundamental belief structure.

You may be reading all sorts of suggestions about creating your personal brand, learning how to make an elevator speech, or building your personal portfolio. These are all part of the story, but the key concept for you to understand is: In order to be empowered in your personal career development, you must choose to be entrepreneurial and use the I Incorporated concept to provide a context for all of these principles.

Successful businesses all need some form of a business plan. A plan might be thoroughly documented, or it might reside significantly inside of the founder's head, but all plans have some form of vision and strategy to pursue that vision. We take that concept and build on it to support your career quest. Essentially, we believe that building and executing a business plan is similar to the concepts and challenges associated with building a career-acceleration plan.

What is unique about this approach is we use the processes entrepreneurs use to build a business plan and transfer them into the context of creating a career-acceleration plan. To build a business, you must identify an under-served need, develop a plan to serve that need, develop a strategy to market your product or service, and lastly, ensure your customer is satisfied. To build a career-acceleration plan, you must identify where there is an opportunity, develop a plan to be able to respond to that opportunity, develop a plan to market yourself, and lastly, ensure you are providing value to the market.

To embrace this concept, you must make a fundamental change in your attitude toward your job-search strategy. This can be uncomfortable and is definitely outside the traditional mind-set of creating a resume and hoping someone will give you a job. Entrepreneurs have a clear understanding of the value their product or service has in the marketplace, and you too must have a clear understanding of your value to the marketplace.

However, before you panic and say you are not ready to go out and start your own business, take a breath and think about what people do when they start their own business and then think about how you might transfer those behaviors into your own career pursuits. Also, realize that even though you may not want to

actually start your own business, in reality you are in business for yourself. This is the fundamental difference that exists in the market today. In the past you could go to work for a company and remain there for your entire career. That has totally changed. You should expect to move into many different roles throughout your career, possibly in one or many different companies, many of which have not yet even been developed.

Allow yourself to approach the market as an entrepreneur. Again, treat potential employers as potential clients. Regardless of where you choose to work, this context will serve you in your initial job search as well as throughout your professional life. Once you begin to approach your career-planning process using the same concepts you would use to develop a business plan, you will be able to draw from the experiences of entrepreneurs and apply those lessons to your own career strategy.

As we further develop the entire package of somewhat nontraditional career-planning tools and techniques within the I Incorporated context, you will be able to constantly ask yourself a few simple questions. If I were starting/running a business, how would I handle this specific challenge/opportunity? How would I articulate the value I bring through this skill or ability? Why would someone want to pay for this service? How do I communicate the value in a compelling and interesting manner? Successful business owners deal with these issues all the time. In order for you to be successful, they must become part of your personal repertoire and constantly serve as inspiration and insight into your career decisions.

BUSINESS PLAN/CAREER PLAN

There is another quotation by Steven Jobs that I feel is very relevant to consider at this time. Essentially, he is credited with saying: “Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it.” Take that idea, embrace it and then develop a plan to make it a reality.

As I mentioned earlier, we use the concepts in a traditional business plan to help inform the kinds of things you need to do to develop a viable career plan but it goes further than that. In order for your plan to be successful, I want you to take a moment and reflect on the following list of characteristics that are generally associated with a successful entrepreneur. Now, it would be unrealistic to expect that any of us are strong in all of these areas. We are going to be very well developed in some, and others will need further attention. That is OK. We are all human, and to expect perfection is unrealistic. However, it is good to have an idea of what we are striving to become as we work through the concepts of building our own career plan.

When we review some of the literature about what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur or someone who is successful at being an entrepreneur of their career, we find the following items to be very important. People in this arena:

- Set personal goals
- Are strongly committed to the outcomes
- Possess a spirit of adventure
- Have a strong drive to achieve results
- Are self-confident
- Are a self-starter
- Are innovative, creative and persistent
- Do not give up easily
- Are a positive thinker
- Push themselves to improve
- Embrace uncertainty
- Take smart risks
- Are not afraid to get their hands dirty
- Love what they do

It is a very tough list to aspire to become, and yet once you do, you will never have to hope that someone will give you a job. Instead you will have the drive, passion and commitment to find your way and identify the kinds of opportunities that truly will feed your soul and be consistent with what you are truly capable of becoming.

Review the list. Identify those that you are strong in and those that need improvement. Continue to build the ones that are strong and develop a strategy to accommodate those that are not that strong.

PLAYING THE “BLAME GAME”

One thing you must accept right from the beginning is that you are responsible for your career. It is not the responsibility of your spouse, partner, boss, coworker, politician, teacher, or anyone else in your life. It is totally up to you, period! If something happens in your career and you find yourself in a difficult position, it is up to you to deal with it. No one else is responsible!

Too many people hit a bump in their career and want to play the blame game. They blame the politicians in Washington who are cutting back on programs, or those workers in (pick a country) who are willing to do what they do for less money, or the people they work with who are holding them back. If you are going to benefit from this book, you cannot play the blame game. Suck it up. Take responsibility for your career and make it happen.

I fully realize that if I were reading this book several years ago, I might have stopped right here. After all, it was my current company's leadership that was to blame when I lost my job, not me. I was busy doing what I had always done, and the company changed the game on me. I had built a successful career as a midlevel executive within the company and did not understand how or what had happened.

In reality, what happened was the market and the way the company had to compete in the market had gone through a fundamental transition. What had been valuable traits ten to fifteen years earlier and had served market conditions at that time were now obsolete, and I had not kept up with the market conditions. But when the day of reckoning came, it was easier for me to play the blame game and feel that I had been cheated, instead of understanding the dynamics that were at work and choosing to take full responsibility for what was happening in my career. It was a painful process, but I finally quit the blame game and took control of my career and my future prospects.

Does any of this sound familiar? Have you experienced it or seen it in someone in your family? It is actually a pretty common condition, but I have come to

understand how foolish it was to think that way—and I now know that by using the context we are describing in this book and building a plan using the tools and techniques that are available, you will be more in control of your career and will not feel the need to blame.

VALUE SCANNING

When you play the blame game, you are a victim; your focus is on how you feel and on the entity that is doing you a disservice. That is not a productive way to operate and can only lead to more bitterness and frustration. As an alternative, you can drop the context of the blame game and actually embrace the idea of being constantly vigilant about opportunities that exist in the market. If you run a business, you are constantly looking out for the competition, for changes in the customer's needs, and for factors that will impact your profit margins. In I Incorporated, it is the same thing. You have to be aware of potential competition, potential customers, and opportunities to generate compensation.

Regarding the competition, be aware that there are people out there who are able to do what you do and do it faster, cheaper, or better. If you believe that no one else can do what you do, you are fooling yourself. Someone right now is in a garage developing something or some process that can do what you do for half the price and at twice the quality. Or someone with an advanced degree who is migrating from a foreign country today is hungry, wants your job, and is willing to do it for half what you make.

I am not saying this to make you paranoid or a protectionist. Free trade on a global basis provides us with a standard of living in the United States that is unheard of in many other parts of the world. The key is it needs to be “free.” People have to be able to enter and exit the market freely in order for it to work. You can bury your head in the sand and hope it does not happen to you, or you can naïvely believe that your company will “take care of you,” or you can get your antenna up, scan the horizon, understand your potential customers, evaluate your personal value proposition and constantly be able to clearly articulate the unique value you bring to the marketplace. If you can do that, you will be bulletproof, but if you cannot, you will wake up one morning with a pink slip and no idea how you are going

to continue providing your family with the bare essentials. If you are in business for yourself, you must constantly look at the value of what you are providing. The same holds true in the world of I Incorporated.

How do you scan the horizon? How do you keep track of your value? How do you continuously monitor the value you bring and the demand for your services while you are busy doing your job? One thing you must understand is that scanning the horizon and knowing the value you bring to the market not only helps you, it also helps your current employer. If you have a better sense of your current value, you can continue to improve your contribution, and that will be good for you and your employer.

But let's go back to the business-plan concept to better understand how to scan the horizon. If you are in business for yourself, you must constantly look at the value of what you are providing. Are your customers' needs changing? Are there new competitors on the horizon? Is technology making your product or service less valuable or even obsolete? Business owners are constantly concerned with these factors. In order to remain in business, they must be vigilant, and as a result, the actions they take are not only good for their individual business, they are also good for the customer. And this is a key point! Business owners constantly look for ways to improve the product or service they are providing. This ensures that the customer continues to receive value and that the businessperson can stay in business.

The same thing applies to a career-acceleration plan. Remember that your employer is your client. Scanning the horizon and continuing to ensure that you are bringing value to your employer is good for you and for your employer. In fact, if you simply rely on the value that got you the position in the first place, you are going to become obsolete! There simply is too much change going on in the world for that obsolescence not to happen. You have to change. You have to remain current and relevant.

This is important for your career and will ensure you continue to bring value to your current employer, and to potential future employers, as opportunities present themselves. Constantly scan the horizon. Look for ways to continue bringing value, and you will be valuable to your current employer and able to take that new value proposition into the marketplace, if it becomes necessary to do so.

How do you go about scanning the horizon while you are busy working, going to college, or dealing with the myriad of other challenges we often find ourselves facing? This is where a lot of the career-planning tools can serve you. Regardless of where you live at this time, and if you have not done so already, get registered on LinkedIn, get a subscription to some current and relevant professional periodicals, and start reading the *Wall Street Journal* on a regular basis—all the while looking for opportunities to meet with people and learn about emerging opportunities. In addition, learn to have a specific purpose in mind when you do network.

Also, if you live in Michigan, I have included some additional resources later in this chapter under that heading. However, regardless of where you live, you can consult that list or simply reach out to your local librarian and ask them for help in researching potential companies and industries. You want to go beyond just what is in the local press or what is on their web page. It is fine to read that material but do a little more digging to truly find out how they operate, what their values are, how do they truly generate revenue, what are their growth prospects and how viable are they for you to consider as a potential partner in your career pursuits.

MASS CUSTOMIZATION

I want to take a minute and share a genius marketing campaign with you. You may have gotten something similar on Facebook where there is an advertisement for a sweatshirt that has printed on the front where you were born “aka made” and where you currently live.

Initially I thought I was pretty special because here was a sweater that was targeted just for me with my home state proudly printed on the front along with where I currently live. And then when I went to order one, I realized that they probably did not even have them produced yet. But more importantly, they probably have sent this to just about everyone on Facebook that has listed where they grew up and where they currently live.

Talk about personalized attention! By taking advantage of some simple information, this entrepreneur is able to create a low-risk business venture, catering to the individual interests of each of us and doing it in a way that can create a smile on your face and make you a satisfied customer with very little initial investment.

This is clearly an example of taking advantage of the current environment and learning how to bring value to the market.

You might not be starting your own hoodie sweater business, but each of us need to be looking for ways to take advantage of the information that we have access to and learn to bring more value to the market as a result of the access we do have.

EVERYTHING IS CHANGING

You have probably heard of the expression, “planned obsolescence.” Essentially it is the term used to describe the practice or policy of producing consumer goods that rapidly become obsolete and so that they require replacement, often by something that may have more functionality but may even be more expensive.

Everything becomes obsolete eventually. The jobs that our parents did have largely been enhanced or even replaced by technology. All you need to do is look around and see what some of the people in industry are currently doing, and you will see that many of these jobs did not even exist 10 or 15 years ago. That trend is going to continue, and even increase, so it is important for you to both understand that things are changing but also embrace the idea and take advantage of the opportunities that this fact provides to us.

On the flip side of planned obsolescence, is the idea of obsolescence that occurs simply as a by-product of a rapidly changing economy. We are calling this phenomenon, unplanned obsolescence. It is real and it continues to permeate all of our lives.

To get a feel for what I am talking about, go back 20 years or so and look at what the introduction of the personal computer and word processing software has done to typist and traditional secretary jobs. They have been virtually eliminated!

Another example that is more current is the explosion of GPS capabilities on your personal cell phone. Think about what GPS has done to producers of road atlases or specifically what it has done to the American Automobile Association by essentially replacing the service that they used to provide through their TripTik service. I can remember when we would take a long road trip and would have AAA

produce a TripTiks to guide us along the way. Now my cell phone with the GPS provides even better trip management information with real time traffic updates and places to eat along the way.

Or what about the emergence of driverless cars. The technology is getting very close to being fully operational, and it will not be long before they are replacing long haul truckers with driverless technology. Driverless trucks do not need to take periodic rest stops and only need to stop for fuel as required. The impact may result in lower costs to transport goods as well as making them available more rapidly, but the impact on truck drivers and truck stop operators is going to be huge.

So the question is: What does this have to do with me? I am safe. I am not a typist, or a map maker or a truck driver. I know that no one can do my job as well as I can do it. Right?

Wrong! Look at what you do and assume that it can be replaced. The question is not: Can it be replaced? The question you need to ask is: How can it be replaced?

Now I am not saying this to make you paranoid or angry about “those immigrants” that are coming to America and taking jobs. And by the way, most everyone in the US is a result of immigration, so don’t blame anyone. It is up to you to take control of your career and ensure that you do not become obsolete!

The worst thing you can do is to keep doing what you do under the mistaken belief that what served you last week will continue to be valuable next week.

So what can you do? It starts with accepting the fact that you must scrutinize what you do and ask yourself three fundamental question.

1. How can what I do be replaced by technology or by someone else who can do it for less money and/or higher quality? And don’t think it cannot be done because it can be done.
2. Then, ask yourself if you truly want to stay in your current role.
3. If the answer is no, then get going on your new career quest and do not wait until you are replaced. However, if the answer is yes, then get started on re-engineering what you currently do so that you are truly bringing more value to the people you serve.

Look at what you are doing with a critical eye and imagine that you are paying someone else to do it. Ask if you feel that you are getting your money's worth? Figure out how to ensure that you are bringing value and then do what you need to do to change your approach so that it is more valuable.

And then, after you have done that, get ready to do it again. The point is that it never stops but as long as you are consistently looking at what you are doing and questioning the value of how you are currently doing it, you will be OK.

Realize that it is a never ending process, so get on board and do not allow for yourself to be a victim of "Unplanned Obsolescence." It can actually be a very exhilarating and positive experience. You might want to include some specific tasks in your career plan to test the "Unplanned Obsolescence" that might currently exist in your area of career interest, and develop a strategy to respond to what is happening in a positive and valuable way.

NETWORKING WITH A PURPOSE

What do we mean by "networking with a purpose"? We mean having a clear objective in mind whenever you engage with others in some form of networking environment. I heard once that while he was president, Lyndon Johnson would give his wife an assignment to find three people who could provide significant financial support to his campaign efforts every time she went to a networking event. You are probably not looking to run for president, but you do want to have a clear purpose in mind when you go to an event.

Some potential purposes might be:

1. Look for an opportunity to serve someone with a skill or ability that you are developing,
2. Find someone who can give you some practical advice about a certain career field,
3. Identify someone who can give you some specific insight into a certain industry, or
4. Connect with someone who would want to learn more about what you do.



Notice that I do not say to look for someone who is hiring. That is never the reason to network, even though it might be in the back of your mind. You network with people to make a connection, and the more you can have a specific agenda outside of finding out who is hiring, the better able you will be to connect with people who can serve you and whom you can also serve. When you go to an event, think about who is attending the event. Identify three or four key objectives for your participation and then ensure that you meet those objectives.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

One key way to network with a purpose is to actually seek out what are called “informational interviews.” Going on an informational interview does not mean you are looking to change jobs. In fact, doing an informational interview with someone in your current company can even be effective. After all, you are simply looking for information about how you can be more valuable in your current role. And when you think about it, this could be something that would be viewed positively by your current employer. After all, isn’t it important to always know what it takes to be successful and then commit to a strategy to help enhance your current value to the workplace?

The key is that you are always in inquiry mode. You meet people on a plane, at a conference, through LinkedIn, or through a friend, and you look for opportunities to spend time with them to better understand the market, their sense of what is valuable, and what you can do to ensure that you bring value. You would do it if you were running your own business. There is no difference. Remember, you are in business for yourself, so networking whenever you have the opportunity has got to be good for your personal career-planning process.

That said, it is also a continuous process. In the following chapters, we will discuss some of the tools you need to master in the pursuit of your career aspirations, as well as dig deeper into the ideas of networking and informational interviews. We will also explore many specific tools such as an electronic portfolio. One thing that a portfolio can do is help you document examples of your personal value that you have developed in response to your value-scanning activities. Then, as your portfolio develops, you will want to keep it current by removing items that are

becoming obsolete while adding examples of the new and emerging skills and abilities you have developed. You can also include examples of the track record you are continuing to develop that showcases the areas you have identified as being important as a result of your ongoing value-scanning activities.

However, before we get too entrenched in some of the tools, let’s spend a little time with another concept that often gets ignored when people work on their career plans.

MARKETING

In order to develop this concept a little further, we must borrow a page from traditional marketing literature and see how it pertains both to starting a business and launching a career. We are talking about marketing, which is all about price, place, promotion, and product.

As an entrepreneur, you must develop a strategy to address all these elements, and as an individual developing your personal career-acceleration plan, you must do the same thing.

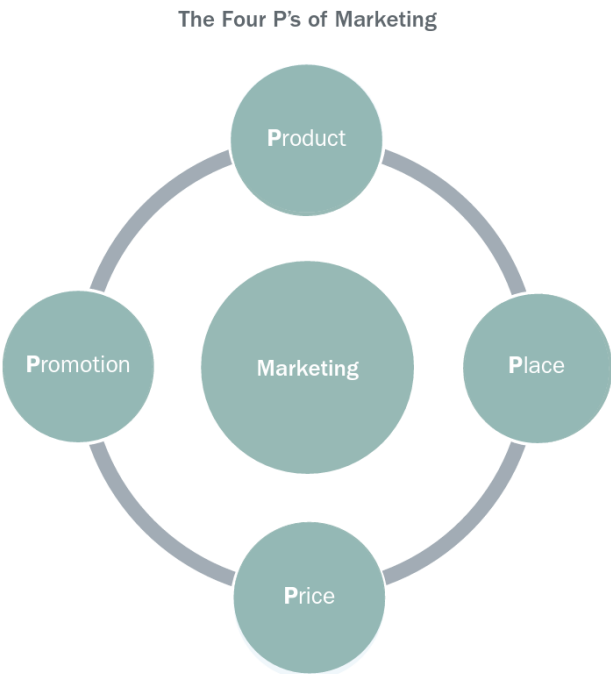


FIGURE 3.1. THE FOUR P’S OF MARKETING.

THE FOUR P'S (LEVERS) OF MARKETING

The four P's of marketing theory are price, place, promotion, and product. In the business world they are relevant to how a company chooses to market its goods and services, and they are equally relevant to you in marketing your personal value. You can think about these as levers that you can pull to achieve the desired outcome. The better you are at pulling the right levers, the better you are going to be at achieving what you desire.

Price

Your own “price” is the value you feel you command in the market, and it comes from evaluation and analysis of compensation packages and salary surveys. We will talk more about negotiating a salary package later in the book, but for now you simply need to know that the price you choose to pursue is an integral part of your overall marketing strategy. In order to be successful, you must give it serious consideration, just like the other marketing factors. You bring value to the market, and you want to be able to think about that value in tangible terms.

Place

Your “place” is where you do the work. Most people assume they will go to work for a company and will be provided with a workspace at that firm. However, this is not always the case, and in many instances, you will be able to influence the decision.

Will you be in an office/work location, or will you work from home or on the road? Will you travel extensively or rely on technology to handle communication with people in different locations? You may also want to consider where your customer/client exists. Will you work in a central location and then travel to a client when you deliver your service? Do you need/want to be in an office or out making sales calls? Your definition of “place” can go a long way in articulating the value that you bring and is also an important factor in your consideration of what is important to you in your career.

Promotion

Your “promotion” strategy is all about how you brand yourself and then get the word out about what you can do through informational interviews and other networking opportunities. We will talk more about this in chapter 5, “Building Your Personal Brand,” but it is important to realize that how you are promoted is a function of the effort and commitment that you put into the process. If you allow it to just happen, something will get promoted—but it might not be what you want it to be. The key is to know how you want to be perceived and then develop a strategy to consciously promote your brand in a purposeful way.

A successful entrepreneur will have a concerted focus on his or her promotion strategy, which often involves advertising campaigns, a focused presence in different social media sites, and other ways to get the word out to potential customers. You too must approach your career prospects from a similar perspective: Think about the story you want to tell and then choose the media and approach that will best serve your purpose.

Product

Lastly comes the “product,” which is you. What are the skills, abilities, and experiences you have developed that define the product? How is the product unique? Who does the product appeal to? Why will someone want your product over someone else’s? These are all key factors in an entrepreneurial venture and are equally important in a career development strategy.

These four factors are fundamental to any marketing strategy and will come up time and again in your personal career development process.

Let’s continue to take a deeper dive into the world of an entrepreneur and see if there are more lessons to be learned in our career-planning process.

WHY COMPANIES FAIL

We all know that many small businesses fail, so it makes sense to understand some of those reasons and take action to guard against that happening in your career quest. The four main reasons they fail are as follows:

1. Inadequate market research
2. Limited financial support
3. Weak understanding of product/service
4. Insufficient stamina/drive to succeed

In order to maximize the probability of your success in your career quest, it is crucial that you consider these possible failure points seriously and develop a strategy to overcome them if possible.

IMPROVING YOUR MARKET RESEARCH

In order to help ensure success with your strategy, you must develop a strong sense of what the market will bear. The market for your services is what you must investigate. Look at the following: Who is doing the hiring? What are they looking for? What are the competitive pressures? All these factors are extremely important, and you must develop your own process for doing market research in your career-acceleration plan.

Some great ways to do this are through informational interviews and networking, and we will talk more about those specific approaches later in the book. Suffice it to say that in order to be successful, you absolutely must have a strong sense of the market and the potential value that you can bring to it. Commit to developing a sense of urgency to better understand your market and look for ways to support your research. And by the way, it takes work to figure this out, and you will always be looking for more information. Successful entrepreneurs know their market needs and are able to respond to those needs in a timely manner, but they are also constantly scanning the market for emerging opportunities.

Sometimes, entrepreneurs can identify what the market wants without even asking the market. Steve Jobs was famous for envisioning what people wanted without asking them. In fact, even if he had asked, how could people have told him they wanted an iPad? He led the market, and you can do the same thing. Anticipate what the need is. Don't wait for someone to tell you. If you do, you may be too late. Give it some serious thought, envision how you can add value, and then develop your plan ahead of the competition.

FINANCIAL BACKING

In the next chapter, we will discuss the idea of surviving, adapting, and ultimately flourishing in your career quest. It is important you are able to maintain your livelihood while you are on this quest. I once had a colleague suggest I get a job at a local hardware store while I was in the job-search process. My initial reaction was that I was appalled. How could I look myself in the mirror if I was performing a job for close to minimum wage when I had previously had a job in the low six-figure range? However, I finally came to the realization that I needed to get over myself. A job that provided some financial support while I was on my quest for my career opportunity was not a bad idea. In fact, it is what I eventually wound up doing, but initially it was a tough pill to swallow.

It is obviously important that you have some financial resources to get you through the tough spots. If this means working at an entry-level job to help tide you over, then that is what you must do. The key point is you must be prepared to do what you must and be willing to put up with some hardships in the short run, as long as you can keep your eye on the goal.

PRODUCT/SERVICE KNOWLEDGE

An entrepreneur must fully know what his or her product/service is capable of performing and what adjustments might be possible in order to take advantage of market conditions not originally considered. In fact, there is a concept called “features and benefits” that I want to introduce at this time.

A product’s features are what you can see when you look at the product. Is it red or green? Is it made out of steel or aluminum? Features are relatively easy to identify, and they influence the purchase of the item to some degree. In your case features might be things like having a college degree, being certified in project management, or even having five years’ experience in a given role. These features will help you in the job quest, but they are only part of the story.

A product’s benefits are what the consumer derives from using the product. You may want to buy a red car, so the feature of a red car will help you narrow down the choices, but the final decision will be a red car that gives you the benefits that you desire. There will be many red cars to choose from, but the one with the

best gas mileage, safety rating, or maintenance history will get your attention. You must decide what your features are and how you can use them to differentiate you in the marketplace. We will talk more about this idea in chapter 7, “Articulating Your Personal Value Proposition,” but for now, just know that you must understand both your personal features and benefits in order to effectively market yourself in today’s economy.

You can look around and see all sorts of products that have been adjusted as the demand for different attributes has changed. The most glaring is the smart phone. To call it a “phone” today is a bit of a misnomer. It is a portable computer that can fully connect to the internet and can be used to call people, take pictures, find out where you are, and even play music. In only a few years, the phone has morphed into a totally different piece of equipment to respond to consumer interests and demands.

You must also be able to rise to the challenge. When you look at your current features and benefits, they may be good for today, but it will not take long for them to become obsolete. You must continually reinvent yourself and your abilities in order to continue to secure viable opportunities in the marketplace. An entrepreneur who allows his product/service to become stale will soon find him- or herself out of business. Once again, the same holds true for you and your career development.

DRIVE

Any book you pick up about a successful entrepreneur will tell you about that person’s unquenchable drive to succeed. Every time successful entrepreneurs hit a roadblock, they figure out a way around it. Nothing, absolutely nothing, will stop them from achieving their goals. These roadblocks include external factors, competition, delays in the shipment of parts, family members, or their own nagging concerns that what they are doing will fail. Any and all of these factors come to play a part in the downfall of many entrepreneurs’ visions for success. However, the strong prevail and continue to make their business ventures successful, but the weak and timid quickly give in to the enormous pressures.

Walt Disney even had a bit of a rough start. He was fired by a newspaper editor because “he lacked imagination and had no good ideas.”

Don’t ever let anybody tell you that you do not have what it takes to be successful. However, you must develop a strong drive and accept the fact that you may fail many times along the way. Do not even enter into this approach if you are looking for an easy way to get a quick job. Anything worth having is worth working for, and if you want a challenging, viable, and rewarding career that is worthy of you, you must be prepared to overcome resistance and channel your drive and energy toward accomplishing your goal.

That does not mean that it is drudgery or a terrible experience to pursue your career aspirations. Actually, it is very much the opposite. Pursuit of your true career aspirations is a noble venture. It is empowering, engaging, and a feat worthy of your effort. Find your dream, strive to achieve it, and never let the naysayers tell you it will not work. Stick to your commitments, and you will be rewarded in the long run. I have been, and I know it works.

The most significant similarity between starting a business and a career comes down to the level of commitment you have for the objective. Nothing we have talked about or will cover in this book is easy. You have to be prepared to work at it. It is not unheard of to think of a career quest being a full-time job. Launching a business is all-consuming, and launching your career can require just as much of a commitment.

However, the benefits are worth the effort. Just like a budding entrepreneur, you must network. Learn your elevator speech and practice it again and again. Be prepared to tell your personal story effectively and with passion. Show commitment to your objectives, stick to your convictions, and have faith in the outcome. It does work for entrepreneurs, and it will work for you.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are some suggested ideas for you to gain further information about potential companies if you are living in Michigan. Take advantage of the free databases available through the Michigan Electronic Library (MeL). Begin at your local public

library's website and look for the MeL link. From there, you will be able to access business database such as:

- Academic OneFile
- Business Decision
- Business Insights: Global
- General OneFile

Narrow your search to business news and choose a date range that is current. You can even specify a specific source if you wish (i.e. Harvard Business Review, MIT Sloan Management Review, etc.)

In addition to this content, if you are a student within the University of Michigan system, you can use the Mardigian Library's subscription to the Factiva database to access top *Wall Street Journal* articles each day of the week. You can also use Browzine, an online browsing service, available through the Mardigian Library, to read new issues of hundreds of magazines as they are released or even create an online bookshelf. And lastly, you can browse the Business Section of the *Detroit Free Press* (www.freep.com) and *Crain's Detroit Business* (www.crainsdetroit.com) for local and regional business news.

NOW WHAT?

How can you practice some of these ideas? One thing to consider is that most learning happens through doing, not just reading about a topic or listening to a lecture. The idea of the "Now What?" sections in this book is to give you the chance to experience, firsthand, how you can apply these concepts.

Here are some suggestions, and you might want to commit to one or two, document them in your career plan, commit to when you will do them and then give yourself a pat on the back when you actually complete the task. None of what we are discussing in this book is easy. It takes effort and commitment to make this a reality. However, the benefits of embracing and pursuing these ideas will help