

# IGNITE YOUR CAREER!

Strategies and Tactics to  
**Unleash Your Potential**



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## Introduction

“What do I want to do after I graduate college?”

Most students find themselves wondering about this sooner or later. Perhaps you already know the answer. If you do, that’s great: I can help you achieve your goals. But if you don’t, don’t worry. You’re not alone. In fact, you’re one of the many.

Your friends might say they already know they’re going to be lawyers or accountants or doctors, but that doesn’t mean they’ve actually thought their careers through thoroughly. Some of them have never stopped to ask themselves, “*What do I want to do for a career?*” They may just be following their family legacy—expectations that may come back to bite them down the road.

To figure out where you will be most successful, you need to start with a different question: *What am I really good at and how can I leverage my strengths?*

This is one of the most important questions you can ask yourself at virtually any time in your career—but especially at the beginning.

In this book I can help you answer that question. I’ll show you how to figure out your strengths and where they might lead. I’ll also provide you with the tools to help you achieve your goals.

I’ve developed these tools during a twenty-five-year career as an executive recruiter. During that time, I’ve not only placed over 1,000 candidates in new jobs, I’ve counseled more than 20,000 others at all stages in their careers, including when they were just starting out. Whatever stage you’re at, I can help you.

# It's Like Stepping Off a Cliff

If you're getting ready to graduate, you already know that it brings a lot of uncertainties. Throughout our entire education, we're taught to see graduation as a goal. Then you get there and it turns out to be just the starting point of another journey.

And there usually aren't many signposts.

Everything you've done up until now has been the next step on a journey that's likely been mapped out for you, from grade school through college. But now there are no more neatly laid-out steps to follow. As many universities note, "For most students, graduation is like stepping off a cliff."

There are so many potential career opportunities that while this should be an exciting time, it's all so unknown and overwhelming that it can be completely debilitating. Almost two million young adults graduate from US colleges every year, and 30 to 40 percent wind up being underutilized in their careers. They take jobs that don't fully use their skills and intelligence. Not because they lack ability or talent, but because they don't know where they want to go or how to get there.

I don't want this to happen to you!

So here you are in college. You're surrounded by people who all seem as though they know what they're doing and where they want to go. Meanwhile, you're full of doubts. You're not sure what you want to do for a career. Looking ahead might even make you feel like a bit of a fraud, as though someone's going to tap you on the shoulder and say, "What makes you believe you're in any position to start thinking about setting career goals?" Even if you know what you want to do, you may not know how to get started.

The truth is that many of your classmates feel the same way. Trust me, you are absolutely ready to lay the foundation for what happens next.

# What You'll Learn

This book will help you get started with easily relatable, practical advice for finding your career path. On these pages you'll find what you need most to be successful on your journey, beginning with self-evaluation, planning, and hard work.

In part I, we'll cover the strategic foundation for your career. Here's what you'll learn:

Chapter 1: Your Superpowers: I'll show you how to uncover your strengths and figure out how to leverage them in your job.

Chapter 2: Learn, Do, Leverage: I'll walk you through the phases of your career and what is critical in each phase.

Chapter 3: The Right Fit: I will explain how to assess company culture so that not only will you excel in a job, you'll also feel comfortable where you work. I strongly believe that culture and fit are crucial for happiness and satisfaction.

Chapter 4: The Long View: You'll learn how to keep your eye focused on your long-term goals and assess future opportunities, looking through a long-term lens to make sure you make smart career choices.

In part II, I'll take you through the practical tools needed to achieve your goals:

Chapter 5: A Winning Resume: How to write a resume that differentiates you, makes you appealing to employers, and sets you up for productive interviews.

Chapter 6: Build Your Networking Muscle: Why networking is so important and how to network effectively.

Chapter 7: Boosting the Odds: How to effectively apply for jobs.

Chapter 8: The Interview: How to prepare for interviews so *you* get to decide, “Do I want the job?”

Chapter 9: Win–Win Negotiation: How to negotiate a salary and benefits package effectively and build credibility along the way without burning goodwill.

Chapter 10: Resigning: It’s a Small World: How to resign or decline a job professionally so that you leave on good terms

## There’s One Catch

There’s a catch, however, and it’s one of the most important lessons in this book.

Here it is: There are no easy wins when you’re searching for a job.

I can’t do the work for you. You’ll need to put in the effort, both to determine your goals and to build the tools to achieve them. It will take focus, time, and as I’ve already said, plenty of hard work. It will be worth it. I promise.

I am here to guide you every step of the way. Remember, you’re investing in yourself—and the payback for your efforts will be enormous!

## Conclusion

Not long ago, I was working with a candidate who was quite junior in his career, but who I thought had a good initial foundation of analysis and some marketing experience. His company was going through Chapter 11, so he was interviewing for a new job. He was a strong interviewer, and he got two offers, and the promise of two more in-person interviews. One offer was a lateral move to a strong training company. The other was with a tiny company, but it had an elevated job title.

Guess which offer appealed to his ego? His instinct was to go to a small company, where he would get promoted really quickly.

He asked for help with his decision, and I talked a lot about learn, do, leverage (see chapter 2). We discussed the tree analogy (see chapter 4), and how building a strong trunk was so critical. He really took it in.

The next day, he came back to me and said, “I want to build a sturdy trunk.” He made the best decision for his long-term career potential and went to the strong training company, even though it was a higher cost of living there. His words to me were, “Now is the time to build a deep foundation. I have my entire career to focus on making money.”

As a reader of this book, you probably know that I believe his decision will set him up for long-term success. He put his ego aside and took the long view.

You can also make the right career decisions, if you take the long-term view and can keep these analogies in mind:

- Your career is a marathon, not a sprint.
- Visualize your career like a tree.
- Be like a pool shark: Focus on winning the game, not making the easy shot.

As I explained early on in the book, it's important to be strategic about your career and mindful of how short-term choices will impact your long-term future. This strategy never gets stale. I urge you to revisit it throughout your career to help you keep on track and focused on the long term.

As an executive recruiter, I find it incredibly rewarding to assist individuals through the process of career development, growth, and transition at all levels, from SVP of marketing and chief marketing officer down to college graduates. Helping others optimize their career path is my life's calling.

## Over to You

So, now you have your map and your tools. *Off you go!*

Build your foundation; develop superior skills; find a great culture fit; learn, do, leverage; and focus on your long-term goals. Invest in yourself, do your homework, network throughout your career, and treat others with kindness and respect. This world we live in is small and your reputation is the core of who you are.

I wish you happiness and great success in this crazy journey called life.

Kris

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