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DREAM CRAFTING

THE ART OF
DREAMING BIG

THE SCIENCE OF
MAKING IT HAPPEN

FIVE SKILLS FOR ACHIEVING ANY GOAL

An Excerpt From

***Dreamcrafting:
The Art of Dreaming Big,
The Science of Making It Happen***

by Paul Levesque and Art McNeil
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Nothing happens unless first a dream.

—CARL SANDBURG



Introduction: The Five Macroskills

Failure Factors

Top 5 Reasons Why Most People Never Realize Their Big Dream

1. There's no single clearly defined objective.
2. There's no mechanism for sustaining motivation.
3. There's not enough time to devote to it.
4. There's little or no support from family and friends.
5. There's no understanding of how every seemingly unrelated little improvement advances the big dream.

What if imagining possibilities and then realizing them—that is, making dreams come true—turns out to be *the* distinctly human capacity, the one and only thing that sets our species apart? (Language was long thought to be the title holder, until a bunch of smartaleck gorillas and chimps learned to use sign language and computer touch-screens to make their feelings and wants known, and some show-off dolphins began formulating sentences by pressing series of noun buttons and verb buttons and pronoun buttons in the proper order.) What if it turns out the only reason not everyone succeeds in making their own “imagined possibilities” a reality is that there’s a special *knack* involved? What if *anyone* might be able to realize their Big Dream, as long as they developed the key skills to overcome the failure factors listed above? The lucky ones are those who apply these skills automatically, unconsciously, intuitively. Most other people don’t even know they exist. Ours is a society full of people with the “know-what”—but not the “know-how”—to make their dreams come true.

What’s *your* Big Dream? Lose weight? Career advancement? New house? Quit smoking/drinking? Financial freedom? Find Mr./Ms. Right? Ride the space shuttle? All of the above? It doesn’t matter what the dream is; as long as it’s something that’s deeply important to you, something that generates a tingle of excitement in your belly any time you think about it—then it qualifies as “big,” even if others seem inclined to belittle it. Dreamcrafting is not an activity restricted to those who hope to become the next Walt Disney or Oprah Winfrey. A “big” dream is any goal that generates serious belly-tingle for you; all other factors of scale are secondary. Granny’s rose garden is no less an achievement than Walt’s theme parks; they’re both the tangible product of personal dreams realized. And the *process* for realizing such dreams is identical. It’s this very process that is at the heart of *Dreamcrafting*.

Skills of a Higher Order

Alex dreams of a career as a professional singer. Obviously, therefore, Alex must master the skill of *singing*. Lots of discipline is required: long hours of practice, voice exercises, and so on. When people talk about all the hard work it takes to achieve success, they're usually referring to skills and disciplines at this level; let's call it "voicecrafting" in this example. But even after a lot of this kind of hard work, not every skillful singer succeeds in realizing his or her big dream of a *career* as a singer. Making any big dream come true requires skills of a different kind, skills at a higher level, skills that (for singers) have little or nothing to do with voicecrafting in particular. Beyond developing the breath control to be able to sustain a high C for an extended period of time, Alex will also need to sustain a high level of *motivation* for an extended period of time if the dream is to be realized. Sustaining motivation is one of the key disciplines of dreamcrafting, a skill of a higher order—we call it a *macroskill*—that applies to the realization of any and all big dreams.

This notion of *macroskills*—skills of a higher order or that operate at a higher level—may strike some as abstract and confusing. One way to clarify the idea may be to think in terms of set and subset: for example, *fruit* is a subset of "food"; *apple* is a subset of "fruit"; *Red Delicious* is a subset of "apple." Another way to think about it is to keep the phrase "including, but not limited to" in mind. Let's say Janice dreams of becoming a ballerina, and Mario hopes to become a master chef. The dreamcrafting macroskills make no reference whatsoever to the fine points of executing pirouettes or eggs Benedict; (those are "dancecrafting" and "mealcrafting" issues). Instead, they outline what must be done to make big dreams come true, *including, but not limited to*, dreams of dancing or cooking for a living. Janice will of course have to learn how to dance superbly—but even if she does, this still may not be enough to make her dream come true. Nor is every good cook equally good at

cooking up a career as a master chef. This is where the macroskills make all the difference.

We traditionally think of success as the product of three main factors: talent, skill, and ambition. (Some might like to throw blind luck into the stew as a fourth ingredient, but for now we'll leave it out of the recipe; more about luck in chapter 4.) In this traditional view, talent represents innate ability, the natural aptitude an individual either does or does not possess. Talent can be developed, but most would agree it cannot be acquired if it's not there to begin with. What *can* be acquired is skill. Both the musically gifted child and the tin-eared youngster can master the mechanics of “keyboardcraft”—of reading notes on a page and translating them into specific keys played by specific fingers on a piano. If both these kids entertain the dream of becoming a professional musician some day, does it necessarily follow that the one with the greater talent is bound to have an easier time making this dream come true? Many would instinctively answer that it does, that this is a given. But think of all the supremely talented musicians you have encountered in your own experience who have never managed to break into the “big time” despite years of trying, and all the “big names” whose level of basic musicianship is not really all that impressive. If talent and skill are not the big issues, then what's left?

Assuming that any musician with a dream of making it big has enough basic talent and music-making skill to “squeak by,” it is probably those with the most *ambition* to succeed that have the best chance of doing so. Cultivating within themselves this ambition, this fierce motivational drive to achieve their goal despite any and all obstacles—this is one of the key dreamcrafting macroskills. It applies to *any* big dream, including, but not limited to, dreams of triumph in the realm of music.

Does a skill at this higher level imply a higher level of difficulty as well? Wouldn't it follow that these powerful disciplines must be much more difficult to master and apply than those connected with the everyday (micro-level) skills we've had to master all our lives? The surprising

answer is “not at all.” In many ways, learning to operate a computer, for example, is more challenging than learning to maintain our resolve or win the support of those around us; and yet many who thought themselves incapable of it have learned to use computers effectively.

In fact, we can use the Delete key on a computer keyboard as an analogy to illustrate how going to a higher level of operation can often mean getting more done with less effort. Before the advent of electronic word processors and personal computers, typists had no choice but to laboriously revise or correct their documents one character at a time. On a computer, the operator can highlight a single character or an entire word or a full paragraph or even entire pages, and with a single keystroke instantly *delete* all that has been highlighted. But if the operator moves to a higher level (from the file level to the folder level, so to speak), the same single keystroke can remove entire *documents* at a time. And one level higher, at the directory level, it takes only the same single stroke on the Delete key to obliterate entire *groups* of documents in the blink of an eye. Note that though the power of the key increases at higher levels, the time and effort required to actually depress the key with the fingertip does not (as many of us discovered on our early-model computers when a single misplaced keystroke cost us huge unintended losses of material).

Any computer user setting out to delete many documents, and who does not know about higher-level operations, will invest a lot of time and effort highlighting individual chunks of material and deleting each one separately; those in the know will accomplish the same result in an instant with a single keystroke. Individuals who possess an innate talent for making dreams come true move instinctively to the higher level and similarly accomplish a great deal more in their lives with a great deal less effort. The rest of us must learn about these higher-level macroskills, and discover how we can get them working for us.

Theory and Practice

Teacher: “You’re not doing that properly. It should be done *this* way.”
Student: “Oh? Why is that?”

Teacher: “Because it’s *always* been done this way. Don’t ask so many questions.”

The “craft” part of dreamcrafting is the skills part. But what some teachers fail to recognize is that real mastery of any skill, whether at the micro- or macro-level, requires an understanding of the *why* as well as the *how*.

Ralph has become interested in taking up woodworking as a hobby; who knows, if he likes it, he may even decide to become a professional carpenter like his cousin Ted. Ralph receives a birthday card from his wife into which she has folded a check for two hundred dollars with a message that reads, “Please use this to launch your new hobby.” Ralph is confronted with a pleasant dilemma: the money would cover the cost of a handsome set of woodworking tools he spotted in a local hardware store—or he could use the money to pay for an evening course in woodworking being offered at the community college. From a dreamcrafting point of view, what’s his best choice?

He mulls it over. “If I take the course, it will probably get me all excited about woodworking. But I’d have no tools of my own, at least for some time; that would be frustrating. If I buy the tools, I can begin getting hands-on experience immediately. The satisfaction I derive from building things right off the bat will fuel my determination to learn, and I can always visit the public library and read up on some of the finer points later, as my projects become more elaborate.”

Ralph buys the tools. He applies himself to learning how to use them properly. He builds a small side table that turns out fairly well, despite being a bit wobbly. Next he tries a rocking chair, but quickly discovers this is too ambitious a project too soon. A small dresser doesn’t come out

quite the way he'd envisioned it, even after he discarded and rebuilt most of it. After many false starts and painful splinters, Ralph begins to realize woodworking is not quite the rewarding pastime he'd hoped it might be—an impression reinforced by a nasty cut he inflicts upon himself one afternoon. The intervals between projects grow longer. One day, Ralph's wife spots the woodworking tools resting on a table among other items in their yard sale.

As happens with many enthusiastic people, Ralph was impatient to get immersed in the “how” of woodcrafting—tools in hand, the smell of sawdust in his nostrils. In his haste to get to the practice, he bypassed theory that the woodworking course would have given him: the different types of wood and why some types lend themselves better to certain applications, the types of joints and why some work better than others in certain situations. In the absence of this understanding, he was doomed to forever be dissatisfied with the results of his efforts. His level of motivation fell off, and later he chalked up his “dabble in woodworking” as just one more example of his inability to stick with a dream and see it through to successful completion.

Ralph's mistake is a common one. How many people do you know who own expensive professional-level cameras, but remain unaware of even the most basic principles of photography? (It's always fascinating to see camera buffs taking pictures of a full moon and using their flash units to “illuminate” an object over two hundred thousand miles away.) Among the people you know who own a piano, how many can actually play more than one or two standard “party pieces” on it? (Uh-oh, here comes another rendition of “Chopsticks.”)

This is a how-to book with extensive “*why-to*” components as well. The book is not aimed at those impatient souls who might like to try briefly dabbling in making this or that dream come true before moving on to something else. It's for readers who are (or would like to become) *determined to succeed*, and is designed to make them masters of the dream-crafting macroskills.

Even those who have already achieved mastery of one or more micro-level skills will need to fully understand both theory and practice of the five macroskills if they hope to make their higher-level dreams come true. Ralph's cousin Ted, for example, is the best cabinet builder in the area. For years, Ted has dreamed of setting up his own cabinetry business in town. Now a younger rival, Harry, who couldn't build a decent cabinet if his life depended on it, has beat him to it. What's especially infuriating is that Harry's shop is doing great and drawing away some of Ted's regular customers. At this rate, Ted may have to go cap in hand and actually ask Harry for a job! The thought of having that younger, third-rate carpenter for a boss makes Ted's stomach churn.

Pam is just as upset. For years she's been honing her writing ability, studying the classics of literature, submitting samples of her work for critical evaluation, and attending every writers' conference she could. Meanwhile that vapid little Janice takes a first crack at writing a novel, and bingo, she lands a book contract just like that, on the basis of a few crummy pages of outline. Is there no justice in the world?

Ted, you may be able to tap-dance circles around Harry when it comes to making cabinets—but when it comes to making dreams come true, Harry's the better hoofer. You know how to custom-fit and stain perfectly; he knows how to set goals and stick with them until they're achieved. Different skills altogether.

Pam, you're good at finding just the right adjective. What Janice is good at is finding just the right publisher. Microskill and macroskill; not at all the same.

How many would-be photographers, pianists, sailors, home-owners—how many would-be *anythings*—have felt the frustration and disappointment of a dream unfulfilled, and have blamed their failure on themselves, on their “weakness,” their “lack of willpower”?

Dreamcrafting bolsters willpower with *skill*power.

The chapters that follow introduce the five dreamcrafting macroskills in both their theoretical and their practical aspects.

The five macroskills are

1. Aspiration—Igniting a Sense of Mission

To make any cherished dream come true, you must first learn to unleash the full power of your basic *determination to succeed*. You must come to feel you're "on a mission," with a compelling vision of success to guide you. In addition, it's critical that your dream be *defined with precision*. The unclear mission is practically doomed to fail from the start. Chapters 1 and 2 outline techniques for cultivating a meaningful big dream that inspires a driving sense of mission, and for achieving great clarity of purpose by defining the dream with precision.

2. Motivation—Intensifying and Maintaining Resolve

Everyone's big problem—motivation levels are high at the outset, but invariably fizzle out in short order. The New Year's resolution is forgotten two weeks later. To stick with your mission, you'll need to set up some form of time-release mechanism for re-energizing your motivation and sustaining your determination over the longer term, despite the inevitable setbacks. Nothing must be allowed to weaken your optimism or enthusiasm. You must master the techniques for renewing and boosting your resolve on an ongoing basis. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 introduce a number of such techniques in detail.

3. Projection—Linking Today with Tomorrow

Who's got time to meet all of today's responsibilities, let alone work on some big dream for tomorrow? You'll need to find ways to free up blocks of time and establish some kind of balance between conflicting immediate needs and longer-term goals. Chapters 6 and 7 uncover techniques for making timesaving gifts to your future self, and for learning to live with "one foot in tomorrow."

4. Inclusion—Getting Others Involved

It will also be important to reduce and ultimately eliminate motivation-sapping resistance from those around you, and get them working with you and for you, rather than against you. Chapters 8 and 9 present powerful techniques for turning resistance into support, and for inspiring others to become directly involved in helping you achieve your mission.

5. Application—Cultivating the Dreamcrafting Habit

Finally, you will need to become even better at using *all* of these skills, since the cycle will repeat itself many times. Chapter 10 describes ways for applying elements of the macroskills to small dreams as well as big ones, on a daily basis. It uncovers the many benefits—some of them life-altering—that will ensue.

Each of the book's chapters concludes with a profile of a famous dream-crafter who applied the macroskills effectively in his or her own life.

Dreamers and Achievers

Don't give up your day job," people will jokingly—and sometimes not so jokingly—admonish others when confronted with their faltering attempts to realize a dream. The reality is that for many, the need for that "day job" is seen as a primary impediment to making the big dream come true.

Above all else, *Dreamcrafting* is a book about creating alignment in life. The basic premise is that a dream generates a sense of purpose, and out of purpose comes alignment. When the dreaded day job, for example, can be seen to be in alignment with the dream—even if only in the sense that it is funding a lifestyle that permits the dream to be pursued during leisure hours—a peculiar hidden benefit emerges. People whose lives are in alignment tend to achieve greater success *even in areas not directly related to*

their dream. What we view as a demeaning livelihood, after all, is one that literally “de-means”—that is, that robs our life of meaning. Bringing such a livelihood into alignment with a meaningful dream often restores meaning to the livelihood itself, with interesting results.

Two brief examples: a night watchman dreamed of being a writer. His friends would ask him, “What does being a security guard have to do with your dream?” “Everything!” he would answer. “I get paid a regular salary to sit at a table all night and write whatever I want!” He was careful to do his job well; it was an assignment he did not want to lose, a rare opportunity to earn money while developing his skills as a writer. One of the companies at which he served as night watchman was so impressed with how well he carried out his duties, they hired him away from the security guard company and made him their full-time *staff* security guard, at nearly twice the salary, and with a more comfortable desk at which to do his writing.

A telephone installer and repairman had once been in a rock band, had dabbled in theater, and had developed a taste for meeting people and bringing good cheer into their lives. He was a mediocre technician, but talked his bosses into transferring him to a marketing job. He did not especially enjoy selling for its own sake, but he realized that in marketing he’d meet a steady stream of people with quandaries he could help resolve. Spreading the product was less important to him than spreading his own brand of energy and enthusiasm for helping others find solutions to problems. He excelled in his marketing role, and before long became the youngest executive in the telephone company’s history.

In both cases, their day job was merely a means to an end—yet, with their lives brought into alignment by a dream unrelated to their jobs, they achieved a level of on-the-job success that may not otherwise have come as easily, if at all.

This is a book that may show you how investing more time and effort in your hobby could provide the fuel to make you more successful at your work. It may help you understand how your love of raising flowers can

improve your effectiveness with your sales team or with your children, or how the profound enjoyment you derive from oil painting may equip you to be a more successful banker or electrician.

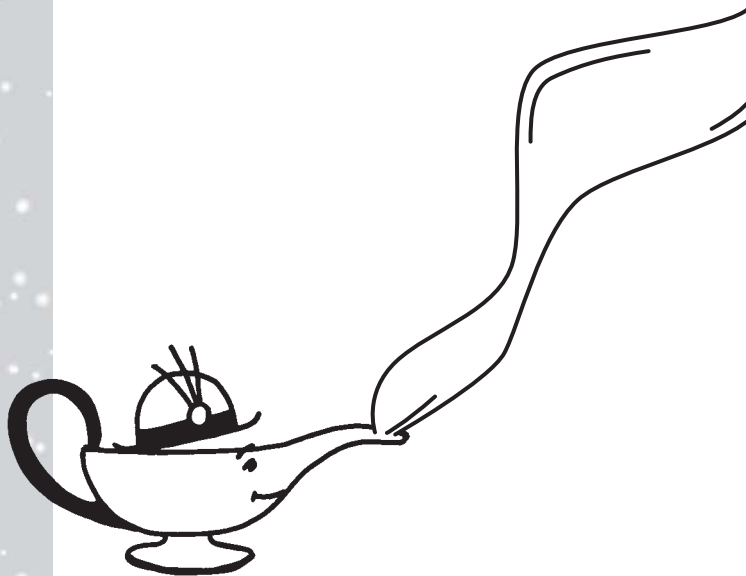
Primarily, of course, it's a book to teach you how to make even your most ambitious dreams come true—as happened for both our security guard and our telephone repairman.

The night watchman with the literary aspirations became editor of technical publications at Amdahl, the company that originally hired him as a guard. He was later offered a position as their training specialist, and caught the help-people-achieve-their-goals bug. In the mid-1980s he became an executive consultant at a company called Achieve; for many years he delivered executive seminars around the world. His name is Paul, and he *did* go on to write several books, one of which you are now holding in your hand.

The telephone repairman eventually left the phone company and created a training and consulting company, the better to connect with people and help them realize their dreams. His name is Art, and he is the coauthor of this book. It was Art's company—Achieve—that Paul joined years ago; the two have been collaborating over the years ever since. Art ultimately sold his company to Times-Mirror; its namesake, Achieve Global, has gone on to become one of the largest training companies in the world.

The authors of *Dreamcrafting* have spent much of their lives not only sharing with people around the world the ideas and concepts that are outlined in the chapters ahead, but also applying them in their own lives. They—that is, *we*—know these approaches work, because we have seen them successfully applied by hundreds of international clients, not to mention by close friends, and by loved ones, and by ourselves, again and again, over the years.

In every case, the journey begins with an individual “on a mission.” Igniting a powerful sense of mission is the first of the five dreamcrafting macroskills, as we're about to see.



MACROSKILL ONE

Aspiration

Igniting a Sense of Mission

Success is going from failure to failure
without loss of enthusiasm.

—WINSTON CHURCHILL



Life in Alignment

“Oh, I’d *love* to have a boat like that. I *dream* of sailing to the tropics on my own boat some day.”

“I’d give *anything* for a dream house like the one in that movie.”

“She really landed a dream job. Her new benefits package is a dream.”

“Oh well—I can always *dream*, can’t I?”

Dream on, brother. Sister, dream on.

We all yearn for things. The stuff of dreams. But interestingly, only very few of us actually set about trying to make our dreams come true in any serious, methodical way. Instead, we devote the bulk of our leisure



time watching or reading about the real or fictional exploits of others as they pursue *their* respective big dreams.

A Driving Force

So, while we're on the subject of fictional exploits—read any good stories lately? See any good movies recently?

The reason for asking is that you can learn something important from every gripping story ever told. It doesn't matter how far back you go, from today's hit movies and novels, through old-time radio dramas and silent movies, to literary classics from another age, back even to ancient myths and legends. For any story to capture the interest and imagination of its audience, it must at the very least have a central character who is driven by a powerful personal sense of purpose. In every story, these central characters find themselves with an important job to do or a serious problem to solve—they are *on a mission*—and they are obsessed with getting the mission accomplished.

An employee at one of the television networks recently found several lost episodes of the old television series *Mission Impossible*. The producers apparently feared these particular episodes might not do well in the ratings, and so they were never televised. Interestingly, these were all episodes in which Impossible Missions Force leader Jim Phelps, played by actor Peter Graves, upon hearing the details of the mission via the self-destructing tape player, thought it over for a few moments and then decided, “Nah . . . I don't think so.”

Just kidding. No one would ever film a story in which the lead character gives up even before the mission has begun—not even if the mission is “impossible.” This is precisely why we use the word *hero* (or *heroine*) to describe the lead character in most stories; this fierce determination to overcome all obstacles and achieve the objective strikes us as nothing less than heroic.

Just when covert operative Lance Rykardt has managed to free himself from the cage that is being lowered into the vat of boiling acid, he is struck in the neck by a dart tipped with a potent, fast-acting poison. He knows a secret antidote is locked within the main underground vault—but the lock’s combination is stored in a computer that can only be activated by a special key, and the key has been swallowed by one of two deadly great white sharks circling hungrily in the deep tank from which there is no means of escape. Most of us, finding ourselves in a similar predicament (as the result, say, of a vacation gone horribly, horribly wrong) would probably be inclined to accept the hopelessness of the situation with a softly muttered profanity or two, and then seek out a reasonably comfortable place to lie and wait for the poison to begin taking effect. Not our hero, however. He’s on a mission to save the world, and nothing—*nothing*—is going to deter him. He will find a way, somehow, and will make it just in the nick of time. We will all applaud, and feel we got our money’s worth. Mission accomplished. Very exciting; great stuff.

Our screen and literary heroes *never* give up. That’s why we continue to buy tickets to see them in action (or books to read about their exploits).

All guidebooks for aspiring screenwriters or novelists give the same advice: to make your story truly gripping, box your hero into a situation that appears to be utterly hopeless, one in which a great deal is at stake, where the character stands to lose everything that matters most to him or her. Not just his or her life; the lives of innocent loved ones too, if you can arrange it. In fact, if you can put the entire world in grave jeopardy, all the better. Now, start piling on the obstacles. New twists and turns, each adding to the risk and danger, each creating an impediment more insurmountable than the one before. Make the hero really sweat, really suffer—and make the audience think, “How is he [or she] ever going to get out of this one?” And then, fashion a climactic resolution that draws on the hero’s own internal resources to produce a completely satisfactory conclusion.



This last point is crucial. No outside forces to the rescue. No happy accidents, as in: *“Just then, to Rykardt’s great relief, an earthquake rocked the entire underground complex, rupturing the great door of the main vault, which swung open as if to welcome him.”* No good. No heroism there. He’s just going to have to somehow overcome his long-standing fear of sharks and get down into that tank, and fast—or come up with some wildly ingenious (but at least semiplausible) alternate course of action. The solution *must* come from within the character, a product of the hero’s “character,” his or her stubborn determination to overcome all obstacles. That is to say, it must come from his or her personal sense of mission.

Many young people see the latest high-tech computer-generated special-effects extravaganza at the local multiplex and think exciting stories only came into the world around the same time they did. Stories from before their time are boring, boring, boring. Only as children get older do they begin to realize today’s stories, stripped of their modern trappings, are simply variations of the same stories that have been told for generations, for millennia, back to campfires at the mouths of caves. These stories tell of heroes with something important to do, who do not let any obstacle get in their way. They tell of people who want something, and want it real bad. These stories resonate across the ages because they are depictions of a *skill* that people from all eras and all cultures admire. A skill they wish they themselves possessed. The heroes in these stories know *how to make a mission the driving force in their lives*. They know how to keep their resolve burning white-hot despite overwhelming obstacles. Their stories remind us that no matter how constrained we may feel by the circumstances of our own lives, our problems are nothing compared to what our heroes have to overcome—and somehow they still manage to get the job done. We use the word *entertainment* to describe such stories, but their function in our lives and throughout history goes far deeper than mere diversion. Such stories nourish our deep-seated need to believe that life’s obstacles really can be overcome, that dreams really can come true.

Real-Life Missions, Real-Life Heroes

It isn't only our fictional heroes who exhibit this fierce determination to achieve some particular purpose in life. History brings us face-to-face with many real-world heroes fuelled by the same driving will to accomplish something they consider important. In the last century alone, plenty of wartime heroes and heroic pioneers of exploration, invention, sport, and industry come readily to mind.

Even in the everyday world there are heroes to be found. The producers of network newsmagazine shows like *60 Minutes* or *20/20* or *Dateline* recognize this, of course, and are always on the lookout for inspiring stories of people who “overcame the odds” and whose lives resonate with some deep sense of purpose. “A story you’ll never forget,” the announcer promises on the show’s opening teaser promo. “A story that will touch your heart.”

For book lovers, an alternate source of inspiration can be found in the biography sections of libraries or bookstores: the lives of high-achievers throughout history all neatly arranged in alphabetical order. These individuals come from every conceivable walk of life, most of them sharing one key attribute—an all-consuming clarity of purpose, an unwavering determination to overcome all obstacles and achieve their goals. They share a will to win that could not be crushed. Heroes were, are, and always will be, people with a Big Dream.

It is this single fact, perhaps more than anything else, that would appear to be the prime differentiator between our real-life heroes and ourselves. They know precisely what their one overarching *mission* in life is, and are somehow able to invest all of their efforts and energies into achieving that one, single, all-important mission. They’re not being pulled in a dozen different directions at once, like we are, always struggling to balance career roles and parent roles and juggle a dozen conflicting priorities. They don’t have to wear sixteen different hats every day, like we do. They’re focused on their one Big Dream, and are able



to devote all their time and energy toward making the dream come true. That's where the big difference lies, right there.

Right?

Aspirational Fields

It's naïve to think of the great dreamcrafters as people who weren't, and aren't, being pulled in as many directions as the rest of us. When you study the minutiae of their lives up close, one day at a time, it's easy to confirm that there is as much clutter and distraction in their world as in our own, as many conflicting priorities for them to sort out as for us. It's only when you step back to that "higher order," that macro view, that the overall *pattern* of their lives looks different. Viewed in its entirety, the life of a dreamcrafter appears strikingly unidirectional.

You may remember the old physics experiment in school: the effect of a magnet on iron filings. The filings are distributed at random on a sheet of paper, and then a magnet is placed beneath the paper; the magnetic field causes the filings to shift into visible alignment along the field's axis. Interestingly, individual filings actually move very little under the magnet's influence, yet the overall *pattern* of the filings becomes strikingly different.

Any deeply held aspiration—a big dream, a clear sense of mission—will produce an "energy field." It will bring all the otherwise random and unconnected elements of day-to-day life into alignment along a single axis, all pointing in a single direction, toward the realization of the dream. The character of individual days may change very little, but the overall *pattern* of a refocused, mission-driven life will look and feel dramatically different.

The effects of aspirational fields are evident in the biographies and profiles of dreamcrafters. It's as if virtually everything they did on a day-to-day basis, no matter how mundane, ultimately helped move them in some direct or indirect way closer to the realization of their dream.

Their aspirational fields brought their whole lives—past, present, future—into alignment. They too had to shop for groceries and take out the garbage and talk teenage daughters out of getting their navels pierced (or the equivalent). They too had to wear many hats and juggle many priorities and solve many problems and get around seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Yet they learned to see even the distractions as *a meaningful part of their overall mission*, not as negative elements pulling them away from the pursuit of their dream. (The need to drive children to a weekend school event, for example, might have been perceived as a distraction—or as an excellent opportunity to engage in conversation en route designed to strengthen the children’s support for the dream over the longer term.) This sense of alignment helped fuel the dreamcrafters’ determination—and it is their unwavering determination to make the Big Dream come true, above all else, that allowed them to bring into their lives experiences and achievements of a kind most people can only barely imagine.

Heroes, remember, are people who *never give up*. Their determination to achieve a compelling mission brings everything around them into alignment toward that goal, and this alignment further strengthens their determination to succeed. This is what heroes have going for them.

The first step in dreamcrafting is to get the same thing going for us. We must redefine a basic mission for our lives, one that is compelling enough to generate a strong aspirational field around us. We must, in other words, find a Big Dream we can believe in.

Life Imitating Business

The discouragement you see in so many people, the lethargy, the passive resignation, the suspicion that things aren’t likely to get much better, and if anything will probably get worse—these are all symptoms of life devoid of a sense of purpose. “What’s it all for?” many find themselves wondering day after day. So much effort, so much



energy, all being expended for what ultimate end? With no Big Dream to give life meaning or purpose, day-to-day living can come to feel like nothing more than a Big Waste.

The problem is compounded when both our home lives *and* our work lives seem equally pointless. For many workers, the sad reality is that there is no motivating sense of mission to be found in the workplace. They spend their time patiently looking forward to the end of the workday, to the start of the next weekend, to their next vacation, to the day of their retirement when maybe somebody will give them a gold watch and the whole sorry nightmare will be over.

Slogans and catchphrases abound to remind us how dreary the workplace is for many people—so much so that one could almost conceive of a television game show based on the challenge of enumerating all of them. To prove the point, . . . *it's time to play Complete The Phrase! And now, to help us play the game, here's the host of Complete The Phrase, Danny Silverman!*

"Thank you, Johnny, and welcome to another edition of *Complete The Phrase!* All right, contestants, you know how the game works, so let's get started. Hands by your buzzers, please watch your monitors and . . . *Complete The Phrase!*"

"DISGRUNTLED _____"

"Yes, Sally?"

"*Employees?*"

"That's *right!* Fifty points, congratulations. Let's check the big board and see what answers were voted into the number two and three spots by our studio audience. Okay, we've got 'disgruntled customers of ours' for number two, and 'disgruntled shareholders' as number three. But Sally correctly identified number one, 'disgruntled employees.' Plenty of those around, aren't there, Sally?"

"I'm one myself. Been one for years."

"All righty! Well done. Let's move to round two, contestants. Hands by your buzzers, please watch the monitors and . . . *Complete The Phrase!*"

"I OWE, I OWE, SO IT'S _____ I GO"

"Tod?"

"So it's *off to the bank* I go?"

"Ooooo, no, that's not it, Tod, sorry. Jeff?"

"So it's *off to work* I go?"

"That's got it! Fifty points to you, Jeff. What other reason could there possibly be to drag ourselves to work, right?"

"I just keep hoping I'll win the lottery."

"You and me both, buddy! All right, let's check our alternate answers. We've got 'off to my parents I go' as number two—time to ask for a handout, I guess. And our number three is 'off to jail I go.' Right, so now we've got a tie situation, with Jeff and Sally each at fifty points. Let's move right on to round three. Ready, contestants? Please *Complete The Phrase!*"

"WORK _____, BUT I NEED THE BUCKS."

"No buzzers? Looks like this one's got everyone stumped. A little clue to help you out, here—we're looking for a *rhyme*. Something that rhymes. Anybody? Jeff?"

"Work *stinks?*"

"No—again, we're looking for a rhyme. Sally?"

"Work *sucks?*"

"Work *sucks!* That's it! There's another fifty points on Sally's scoreboard. Jeff, you had the right idea, but we were looking for that rhyme."

"I was hung up on my own job, which really stinks."

"Couldn't shake the old stinkeroo, huh?"

Our corporate folklore is full of sayings and bumper stickers and placards that make it clear many employees derive little pleasure or meaning from their work. One cartoon depicts a person rolling on the floor with laughter; the caption is "*Remind me again how lucky I am to be working here—I keep forgetting.*" A bumper sticker reads "*Looking for a new job? Take mine, I'm sick to death of it.*" Then there are all those signs that read "*I'd Rather Be Sailing*" or "*I'd Rather Be Fishing*" or any of the countless



other things the expressers of such sentiments would rather be doing than toiling away at their dreary jobs.

And yet, even in the midst of all this, some organizations *do* manage to instill a shared sense of purpose in their employees. Some workers *do* derive great satisfaction from their jobs.

In the work we have done with hundreds of international organizations over the past twenty years, we have had the opportunity to observe at close range the differences between highly motivated, highly successful businesses, and others where morale (and profitability) have sunk to dangerously low levels. Again and again, the conclusion is inescapable: sooner or later it all boils down to the presence—or absence—of a Big Dream.

In the world of competitive business, the single greatest success factor is often the collective sense of mission the business has engendered within its employees. Unless a critical mass of the employee population feels it is united in a shared effort to accomplish something worthwhile, the work that goes on within the organization tends to exhibit less and less actual “organization”—it devolves into a disjointed confusion of busy-work driven by a multitude of vague and ever-shifting objectives that pull in different (and often opposite) directions. The effect of that shared sense of purpose (that collective aspiration) is to *align* all the various tasks and activities along a common axis, aimed in the same direction, toward the same objective. The (perhaps apocryphal) story is told of President Kennedy touring the space agency complex in its early days and pausing to ask a janitor, “So what do you do here, exactly?” The janitor interrupted his floor sweeping to answer, “I’m helping put a man on the moon, sir.” Sweeping floors and putting astronauts on the moon would seem to be very different kinds of activities—but not to this janitor.

At the individual level, too, success depends on a clarity of purpose, a motivating sense of mission that aligns all of the otherwise seemingly disjointed tasks and responsibilities that occupy daily life and focuses them along a clear axis toward a particular end. When even the most mundane and unrelated sorts of activities can be seen as useful steps toward some—

thing bigger, something genuinely worthwhile, this can have a highly motivating—and even liberating—effect. Many writers and artists have commented on how repetitive daily tasks will often relax their minds in a way that leads to important creative insights or breakthroughs. Focusing on a dream provides an energizing *context* for all that fills our days. It can transform even the commonplace into the *meaningful*.

What can we at the individual level learn from the techniques successful business organizations use to define their collective mission? How can we apply this same success factor to ourselves, to help us define the Big Dream that can bring a renewed sense of purpose and meaning into our own lives?

Those are the questions the following chapter sets out to answer.

GALLERY OF DREAMCRAFTERS

WINSTON CHURCHILL
(1874–1965)

The Big Dream

In the beginning, there was no big dream for Britain's future prime minister. He was always in trouble, a poor student, a general embarrassment to friends and family. As was the custom among the privileged class, Winston's father purchased a military commission for him. It wasn't easy to find a military home for this habitual troublemaker, but a deal was cut and young second-lieutenant Churchill was shipped off to Africa to fight the Boers.

Feeling the heat of rejection because of his misspent youth, Winston decided he would make his mark by winning military honors. This became his dream—a distinguished war contribution would make amends and would pave the way for him to enter British politics in his father's footsteps.

Unfortunately, Winston was captured early and held prisoner. Escape was deemed impossible, but against all odds, he did just that, and traveled across Africa to



DREAMCRAFTER: WINSTON CHURCHILL

freedom. The British press reported his exploits, and he became a real-life hero. He enjoyed an illustrious career as a journalist, author, statesman, and politician between 1906 and 1929. But his biggest dream was yet to come.

Winston's relentless condemnation of his country's reluctance to prepare for what he considered an inevitable war with Germany made him unpopular. He was defeated at the polls, and was out of office for ten years. During this time he studied military history. This forced sabbatical prepared him for his role as an Allied leader during the Second World War. He was subsequently reelected and appointed first lord of the admiralty. Six months after Britain declared war on Germany, he became prime minister. The very message that had earlier removed him from power—Britain's ill-preparedness for war—became the key to his success. His Big Dream became nothing less than the destruction of Nazi tyranny.

Basic Values

- The supremacy of democracy
- Uncompromising maintenance of the aim
- The power of unity and cooperation

What the Naysayers Were Saying

- Ill-mannered, rude, and arrogant
- Reckless
- Out-of-touch
- Positioned by birthright; would have been a loser on his own
- A poor student; (perhaps has a learning disability)

The Darkest Hour

For Winston Churchill, the darkest hour lasted a full decade, the ten years he spent out of office because of his repeated—and unheeded—warnings about the German military buildup. To maintain his sanity, he mixed mortar and laid bricks day after day, building a wall around the family estate. He also painted landscapes (with a talent only now being recognized by the art world). His unshakable sense of mission became the anchor in his life, allowing him to maintain his focus and identity during a period that might otherwise have had a devastating effect.

Later, back in office, giving voice to his refusal to give up the dream, Churchill proclaimed, "We shall never surrender." In spite of terrible civilian losses from Hitler's relentless bombing

DREAMCRAFTER: WINSTON CHURCHILL

raids on London, Churchill marshaled the masses to keep the faith.

Validation and Vindication

- Negotiated America's entry into the war
- Defended England in spite of superior German air power
- Negotiated with the enemy (Stalin) when Germany attacked Russia
- Orchestrated Allied cooperation
- Became recognized as the most influential leader in the defeat of the Nazis
- Was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1953 for his historical writings

Memorable Sayings

- *(While walking through bombed-out London ruins on his way to parlia-*

ment each day, Churchill flashed his "V for victory" hand signal, holding a big cigar and confidently tipping his derby hat to an admiring public.) "Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival."

- "One ought never to turn one's back on a threatened danger and try to run away from it. If you do that, you will double the danger. But if you meet it promptly and without flinching, you will reduce the danger by half. Never run away from anything. Never!"
- "We shall draw from the heart of suffering itself the means of inspiration and survival."
- "Continuous effort—not strength or intelligence—is the key to unlocking our potential."

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