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Designing Your Life

DESIGNING
YOUR
WORK
LIFE

HOW TO THRIVE AND CHANGE
AND FIND HAPPINESS
AT WORK

“Good Work Journal” Worksheet

Use this worksheet to reflect on your day and your week and ask yourself three questions: What did I learn? What did I initiate? and Who did I help? Research shows that “noticing” these things will help you get more out of work and increase your engagement on the job. Try to have at least one entry a day.

Date	What did I learn?	What did I initiate?	Who did I help?
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Bonus Day			
Bonus Day			

7TH DAY REFLECTION EXERCISE

Here's a simple four-step exercise you can do weekly. We recommend making it a regular practice to get the most out of it.

Retreat

Find a quiet spot where you can sit comfortably for five to ten minutes, either at a table or with a surface you can write on (preferably by hand, but typing is okay if you prefer).

Close your eyes and just breathe for a moment. Take at least three or four full, calm breaths to slow yourself down and be glad that you're alive and have this quiet moment to yourself.

Review

Now, while still keeping your eyes closed, let the last seven days flow before your mind's eye. As you do so, look for two to four moments in your week that you are attracted to and grateful for in retrospect.

Note: Beware being “attracted” to problems, conflicts, forgotten to-do items, etc. The mind loves to get caught up in that stuff. When that stuff appears (and it will), just tell yourself, *I'll get to that another time*, and let it go. Don't fight it or attempt to resolve it—both of which will steal all your attention. Just acknowledge it, then let it go and return to your reflection. Yes . . . this takes some practice to get the hang of.

As you review your week, being attentive to those 2–4 moments, very briefly jot down just one or two words for each such moment that stands out, so you won't lose it. “cheerful grocer” or “finished essay” or “appeased boss.”

Words _____

Reflect

When you've got your list, look it over.

Fully savor each of those moments again, getting the most out of them. If one particularly pulls your attention, feel free to journal a bit further about the experience. Nothing long or dramatic—just an entry to capture that experience.

Reinforce & Retain

- Then reinforce your reflection by saying to yourself something like *I'm really glad for these things. With these in mind, it was a good week.* This is putting “good enough for now” to work proactively.

That’s it! And it really does take only five to ten minutes.

Bonus Step - Insights

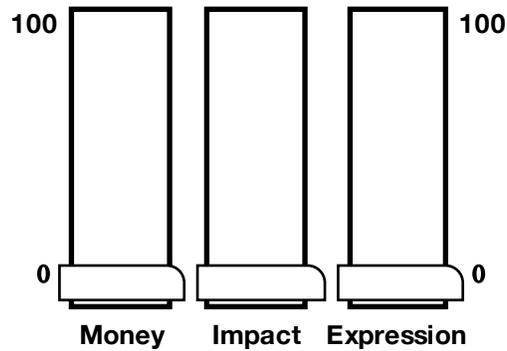
If you notice that any of the moments you identified are offering an insight or a learning you want to capture, write that down, too. Insights don’t always happen, but they’re lovely when they do, so be sure and get yours when they’re available.

Bonus Step—Tell Your Story

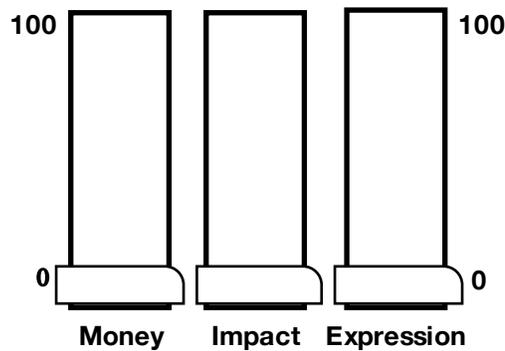
One way of getting the most out of your life is by giving it away—through storytelling. Most of us get asked, “Hey—how’s it going?” at least once a week, if not more often. You could insert a story from your 7th Day Reflection in your answer. “It’s going pretty well, actually. Why, just last week the checker at the grocery store ran out to the parking lot to return the credit card I’d dropped—how great is that?”

Maker Mix Worksheet

This graphic has sliders for three kinds of “maker outputs” - for the market economy, we will adjust **Money** in the mix; for the making-a-difference economy, we adjust **Impact**; and in the creativity economy, we will dial up **Expression**. Like our other graphic tools, the goal is to help you understand where you are today, and where you aspire to be tomorrow. You move the sliders intuitively and keep adjusting the mix of money, impact, and expression until it feels right. There are no units—just a range from 0 to 100.



Now design the mix you like in the future. Are you doubling down on money to pay off those students loans – OK push that slider up. Or are you in a season of life where impact and expression are “how you want to get paid”. Whatever the mix, make it fit for you.



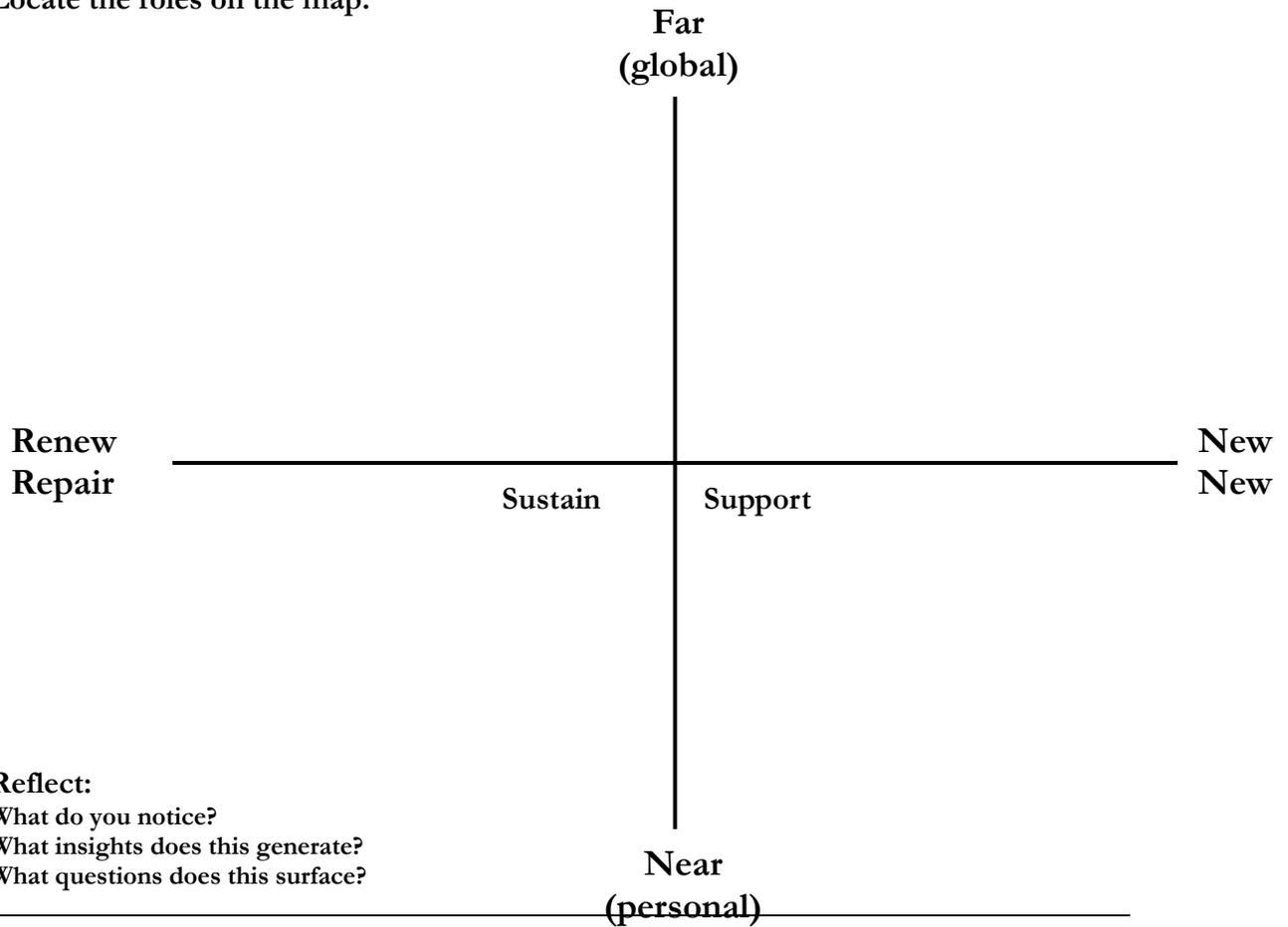
Now write down three things that will help you start moving in the direction of your preferred Maker Mix.

Impact Map Worksheet

List 4-6 roles (past, present and possible future)

(a "job" might have several possible roles, each with a distinct place on the map)

Locate the roles on the map.



Reflect:

What do you notice?

What insights does this generate?

What questions does this surface?

THE MINIMUM ACTIONABLE PROBLEM (MAP) TOOLKIT

Let's practice taking a look at our problems, a real problem in our work and/or our life and see if we can remove the drama and cut the problem down to size. Let's take a stab at coming up with our MAP.

Pick a problem that you would like to work on but make sure it's a real problem, and one that you've been stuck on for a while. Write the problem down, as clearly as you can. Writing it out will help you understand the "frame" that is implicit in the way you state the problem.

Problem:

First, examine the problem for any biases, embedded solutions, drama, or emotional components. This is challenging, because we often do not see our own biases. To do this well requires radical honesty, and a healthy dose of Accept.

If you are struggling to state the problem objectively, ask a friend to help. Read them your problem statement and ask them to help you detect biases, embedded solutions, drama, or emotional components. Let them help you find a couple of MAPs.

Once you have a few ideas about how to reframe your problem into a MAP, put your more objective, nonbiased reframe in the form of a How might we . . . or a **How might I . . . statement**.

How Might I

How Might I

Once you have a few "MAP-ed" problems, **brainstorm (maybe with a friend) at least three different prototypes** that you could try to resolve your problem. Remember: We are setting the bar low here, accepting that a lot of problems can't be fully solved, and looking for a few good ideas for a re- solution for the MAP.

Proto #1 -

Proto #2

Proto #3

Best Doable Option (BDO) vs Best Theoretical Option (BTO) Exercise

The trick here is to know the difference between the Best Doable Option (BDO), and the Best Theoretical Option (BTO).

It frequently turns out that many of the really hard problems in life are best treated as multiple-choice tests. You don't really have to figure it all out— all you have to know is enough to choose. That and the designer's mindset of "bias to action" and you are good to go. We call it "finding the Best Doable Option (BDO)."

It is very tempting to want to find the Best Theoretical Option (BTO). That's the option that you think you should be able to figure out; it's the one you deserve; and it's the one that probably doesn't actually exist! It's only in your head. When you're distracted by the idea of the BTO, all the BDOs, the things you can actually do, seem like a compromise. They're all "settling," and you don't want to settle. But you aren't actually settling, because an option that doesn't exist in reality isn't an option— it's just an idea. Designers are all about making things— real things. We want you to realize your dreams, not just dream them. So formulate the list of actually available options, then pick the best one. The Best Doable Option.

Think about it. Despite many layers of complexity, lots of times there aren't infinite versions of possible solutions to your problem. And by taking a bias-to-action approach, you get unstuck, make a decision, and move into your future - a future that you chose instead of one that would eventually be chosen for you by inaction. When you get good at recognizing your BDOs, you get good at making actionable choices and are the designer of your future.

Pick a problem that you want to work on or something that you are actually working on and would like to find a good solution to.

Problem: _____

Brainstorm at least five solutions to the problem as you currently understand it.

Idea #1 _____

Idea #2 _____

Idea #3 _____

Idea #4 _____

Idea #5 _____

Examine the options you've brainstormed and sort them into BTO and BDO categories

Now eliminate your BTOs and focus on your BDOs. Resolve to have a bias to action, pick one, and execute it.

Ask yourself, how do I feel? Remind yourself that, with that decision behind you, you now have more time to devote to other things. With that decision behind you (and be sure to separate the quality of the decision from the quality of the outcome), you are now free to tackle whatever is next.

GETTING OVER OVERWHELM

Overwhelmed (Y/N)? Ask yourself if you feel continually overwhelmed – are you really persistently overwhelmed or was it just one tough week? If yes, continue. If no - go play Frisbee or walk the dog, you deserve it.

Burned Out (Y/N)? Check if you're actually burned out or overwhelmed by reviewing the following burnout indicator questions from the Mayo Clinic. If you think you are headed for burnout, put the book down and immediately find yourself a therapist specializing in burnout and get good support.

Mayo Clinic Checklist: Answering yes to two or more of these questions might indicate that you are burned out, or well on your way.

- Lack of control. You are not able to influence decisions that affect your job, such as your schedule, assignments, or workload.
- Unclear job expectations. You're unclear about the degree of authority you have or what your supervisor expect from you.
- Dysfunctional workplace dynamics. You work with an office bully, you feel undermined by colleagues, your boss micromanages your work, or there are lots of “office politics” that you don't understand.
- Mismatch in values. If your values differ from the way your employer does business or handles grievances, the mismatch can eventually take a toll.
- Poor job fit. Your job doesn't fit your interests and skills, or you are underemployed and bored all the time.
- Overwhelmed with tasks. Your job is chaotic and there is too much to do.
- Lack of social support. You feel isolated at work and in your personal life.
- Work– life imbalance. Your work takes up so much of your time that you don't have the energy to spend time with your family and friends.

If not burned out, continue on to diagnose what kind of overwhelm you have: Hydra, Happy, or Hyper.

Hydra Overwhelm (you didn't set up this situation, it just happened)

- You have too many different responsibilities
- You are reporting to too many managers (more than one) at the same time or are running too many client projects or side hustles concurrently
- You are consolidating important data from too many different sources
- You have to deliver status information and/or reports to too many people
- You regularly use legacy systems that are cumbersome and poorly designed
- You lack control or are micromanaged
- You are working in isolation

Happy Overwhelm (same symptoms, only you volunteered for all of it)

This is where many of the same things in Hydra are true, and you have too much of a good thing and too many cool things to do, and you mistakenly volunteered to do them all. Your job is challenging but fun, the people you work with are great, and the projects you get offered are all high-impact and worth doing. You are just doing too many of them.

Hyper Overwhelm - the Startup Special Case

The last flavor of overwhelm is a special case, and you usually find it in start-ups. This is where management and staff are “building the plane” and trying to “fly the plane” at the same time. In a startup, there are no organizational norms to follow and very little support infrastructure (in fact, that may be one of your jobs— build the support infrastructure— but who has the time?). The enterprise is having great success and scaling rapidly and that means seventy, eighty, and even ninety-hour workweeks are normal because the job is never done. It’s exhilarating, challenging, and ultimately exhausting. And you have committed to the cause – the startup, non-profit, whatever.

If this is the path you are on, you need a reframe. You need to think of your day-to-day work as a marathon, not a sprint. And that means is you need to implement a particular version of our “good enough for now” reframe, and start telling yourself, your family and your fiends a new story. To make this situation temporarily survivable (the “for now...” clause) you’ll need to reframe and possibly renegotiated agreements with key people close to you (we’re seldom in this situation alone). What really sustains this solution “for now” is a new narrative - which illustrates the power of the storytelling mindset.

Hydra Overwhelm Implementation Plan

Make a “Less Is More” List, a list of things to *drop*, *delegate*, or *renegotiate*. Notice that implementing this is quite different in Happy versus Hydra Overwhelm, but the goal is the same - something has to go. Make a list:

Item #1

Item #2

Item #3

Item #4

Item #5

The Boss or Colleague Giving Plan: If you’re in Hydra, you’ll have to renegotiate some relief, most likely starting with your boss. Figure out what your top Less Is More items are and the best pitch you can come up with to get your boss on board, then arrange that negotiation meeting.

Happy Overwhelm Implementation Plan

If you’re in Happy Overwhelm, you’ll likely be able to delegate to colleagues (who, if you remembered to pick tasty things to give away, will be easy to find), so plan what to hand off and to whom. Then plan those meetings and the delegation process (it may take a few steps to competently release something, but hang in there, it will eventually work).

Item #1

Item #2

Item #3

Item #4

Item #5

Execute: There's no substitute for good execution. Get started with your boss and your colleagues and follow up on all the details. You'll feel better almost immediately.

Hyper Overwhelm Implementation Plan

Reframe: Figure out how to reposition your situation in a way that lets you get the most out of it despite that fact that it's costly (for now . . .) You may need to enlist the help of a friend, colleague, spouse, or partner to get this figured out.

Storytelling: Make up the new story that reframes your situation as an advantage. It should be less than 250 words. Read it aloud to yourself every morning for two weeks (i.e., until you make it true).

Negotiate: Figure out what compromises others will need to make (for now . . .) in order for your Hyper reframe to work effectively. Your Hyper Overwhelm is probably having the biggest effect on those people closest to you. If you enlist help from these folks in your reframe and new story, your chance of success increases. Be prepared to work through some issues and complaints from your intimates - don't be defensive and work toward a story that works for everyone.

Check In: After six to eight weeks, have a check-in meeting with yourself and your closest partners in this Hyper situation, asking, "How's it going?" This will ensure that your approach to getting through your season of Hyper Overwhelm is working for everyone. If things are good with everyone, keep going. If not, figure out what needs updating (the reframe, the story, or the negotiation) and put the needed fixes in place. And be sure to make the changes necessary to get out of Hyper - it's not a place you want to live permanently.

Job Satisfaction Checklist

Job description: _____

(Rate whether you mostly agree (yes) or mostly disagree (no) with the following statements about the job listed above.)

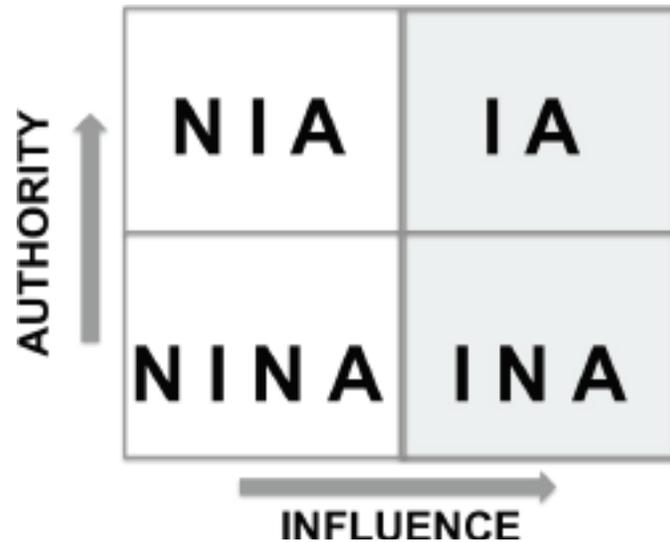
Questionnaire	Yes	No
#1- I enjoy almost every day at this job.		
#2 - This job is one of the stepping stones in my career and I want to do a good job in order to have better opportunities in the future.		
#3 - I am more interested in this job then I was when I started.		
#4 - I think I may be moving toward or potentially have found my calling with this job.		
#5 - I enjoy learning new things on this job, almost every day.		
#6 - Setbacks at work don't discourage me. I don't give up easily.		
#7 - I like setting personal and professional goals, and I use this job to accomplish my goals.		
#8 – I have the autonomy to do this job the way that I think is best.		
#9 – I enjoy collaborating with my peers at this job. It is one of the best parts of this job.		
#10 – I'm working hard to get better and better at this job. Someday I hope to master all of the elements of this job, move on to the next level, and keep getting better and better.		

Scoring: Give yourself one point for every “Yes” answer.

- 1 – 2 points You are working for a living, your current job is probably just a job.
- 2 – 4 points You are enjoying your job, and you may be working on a career.
- 4 – 6 points You are getting grittier, and working on something you value.
- 6 – 8 points You may have found your calling.
- 8 – 10 points Excellent! I wish I had your job, and probably your life.

THE POWER-SORT EXERCISE

This is a very simple and often surprisingly insightful exercise. Draw a 2x2 and label each quadrant IA, NIA, INA, and NINA, as shown.



Think about an ongoing issue you're encountering at work and to the left of your box write the names of all the people involved— even peripherally— in that issue. Then sort those names into the quadrant that best describes that person's influence and authority.

The end result is that everyone is identified according to their relationship to the "Power Zone." Then ask yourself the following questions:

1. What do you notice?
2. Did anyone end up in box that surprised you?
3. What information do you need to complete assigning people to boxes?

If you're like most people in these situations, sorting out the influencers from the NINAs and getting clear information on the rest of the political positioning of all the players provides a powerful insight as to how your organization really works and makes decisions. Once you know that, it helps clarify what you might do next (and especially what you might not want to do).

IMAGINING YOUR QUIT

This is a structured imagination exercise that will help you to figure out what it will feel like when you quit and help you understand what you like and don't like about your current job. Beyond that, it may ultimately help you decide if you want to quit or not.

1. Imagine that, having exhausted all other possibilities, you are going to quit your job.
2. Create a job description that includes everything you do— include the stuff that you are supposed to do and stuff that you actually do. Make it a comprehensive list of all your responsibilities.
3. Now review those responsibilities, and see which ones could potentially be delegated to someone else. Cross those out.
4. Review the remaining responsibilities, and see which ones you do not enjoy doing. Cross those out, too.
5. Review what's left on your list - the items that are left are the responsibilities and tasks that are part of your job description that you enjoy. This is your core job description.
6. Make a list of the new and valuable things you would like to do, if you had the time, training, and support. This is the stuff that would be either helpful to your organization or related to you learning something new, or both.
7. Recompile the list - this is your new core job description. It is designed around your current skills and your emerging new interests. It shouldn't fit the "job" you currently have, it's the one you want.
8. It shouldn't be a fantasy job description.
9. Once you've completed this job redesign, wait a day or so and then come back and read it.
10. Is it consistent, does it describe a job that makes sense? Could someone with your skills and abilities be expected to be good at this job?
11. Now imagine that you are able to find the job you've just described. Really imagine it, and inhabit what it feels like to quit your current job for this one. There is no risk, it's just in your imagination. Then imagine going through the steps you'd have to do to make this new job real.
12. List those steps.

Here's why this imagination exercise works. Adopting the role of the "quitter who moves on to the better job," even in your imagination, allows you to free yourself from the constraints that control the reality of your current job. These are most likely bogging down your imagination. Imagining quitting and moving opens up your creativity and, assuming you like some of the ideas in your new job description, it suggests prototypes that you could try, even in your current job.

Prototypes like:

- Brainstorming with some of your current colleagues about taking on those responsibilities that you delegated away in this new job description?
- Having a conversation with your boss about the things you do not enjoy doing? Imagine sitting down with him or her and brainstorming about how to increase your efficiency by not doing these things.

- How could you prototype learning some of those new things you want to learn, things that would make you happier and might make your boss happier with you, too?

In the end, by imagining this possible future you will have learned something about how you react, physically and emotionally, to this new job possibility. And you have a chance to experience any regret or second thoughts about leaving the job you have, before you actually do it. You might learn something from that experience, too.

We recommend going through this imaginary redesign before you actually quit. It is a refreshing way to reboot your creativity and redesign whatever you're doing, without the real world constraining your solution. And you will almost always learn something about yourself.

THE “QUITTING WELL” PLANNER

After you decide to quit, and before you actually leave your job, make a plan to quit well. As described above, a good, generative “quit” has four steps:

1. Leave the Campsite Better than you Found It
2. Rev Up Your Network
3. Set Your Replacement Up to Win
4. Exit Well, with a Positive Story

Fill in the template to organize your quitting strategy. As your “quit” unfolds (quitting is a dynamic situation and things can change fast), feel free to modify your plan. The thing to remember is that there are important tasks to accomplish and important relationships to maintain. You’ll want to be systematic in managing your quitting project.

Leave the Campsite Better Than You Found It

Make a list the people you work with and who work for you (if any). Figure out how to make sure they are positively affected by your departure. Now is the time to go to their boss and praise their accomplishments. Be selfless and give away any political or social capital you have—it doesn’t come with you to your next job.

Employee _____	Positive Outcome _____

Rev Up Your Network

Make a list of all your good relationships at work; touch base before you go.

_____	Touch Base _____
_____	Touch Base _____
_____	Touch Base _____

Make a list of people you want to meet before you leave, and schedule a coffee.

_____	Coffee _____
_____	Coffee _____
_____	Coffee _____

Set Up Your Replacement to Win

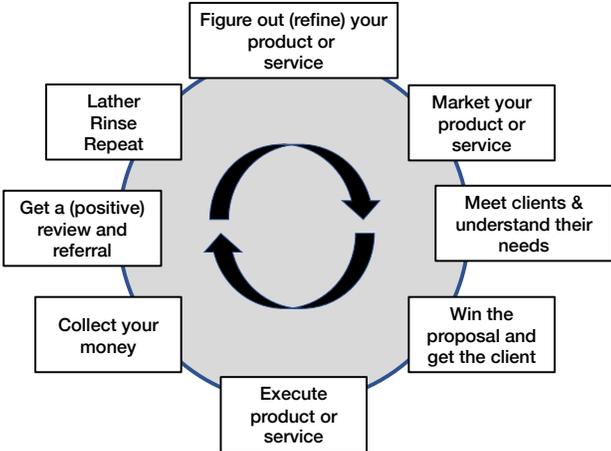
Outline your Quick Reference Manual for the person taking your job after you leave. Consider the following lists and sections and add or subtract as needed.

- Regular meetings, activities, and reports (include examples, templates, schedules)
- List of key colleagues and helpers (names, roles, email, phone)
- List current key issues, problems to be addressed (one page each, with room for notes)
- List old problems that could resurface if not maintained, including what to look for and what if any maintenance is required to keep them solved and stable.
- Procedures for regular functions of the job Reference company documents if available.
Write summary procedures for key actions not documented elsewhere.

Business Planning and Journey Mapping Worksheet

A Simple Business plan:

All consulting or “gig” businesses have a common workflow. The basic workflow of these businesses has seven steps (and an eighth step if you want to keep it going— lather, rinse, repeat) and it looks like this:



Before you start your consulting business, figure out what you are good at (empathy for you) and what the world needs (empathy for your potential clients), and ask the questions, “Is there a sweet spot between what clients need and what I know how to do? If so, can I address this sweet spot with my consulting offering?”

Decide what will distinguish your special version of “getting the job done.” Is it getting the job done fast, or with high precision, or with high reliability, or with lots of creativity? Figure out what will make your product or service stand out from the rest of the consulting crowd.

Set up a workflow that is repeatable, scalable, and measurable (you’ll want to know if you are getting better). Accept that, to charge a premium for your service, you have to get good at sales and marketing; that’s how you will build a sustainable business. Try hard to optimize the rest of your workflow so that you are efficient delivering your service

Let’s fill in a description of each of these steps to get started defining our consulting offering:

STEP 1: What is your product or service?

STEP 2: How will you market your product or service?

STEP 3: First meeting with a client – needs assessment:

STEP 4: Win (close) the deal – what worked and what didn't?

STEP 5: Execute – what needs to happen to make the client experience great?

STEP 6: Invoicing, collection, and follow-up strategy – what worked and what didn't?

STEP 7: Encouraging you client to review you (on social media) – how to do it?

STEP 8: Lather , Rinse, Repeat – do you want to keep going? Why or why not?

Once you get good at the workflow of consulting and have developed a stable of repeat clients and have lots of great reviews and referrals, you can start raising your rates. Once you get really good at your business, see if there are parts of your workflow that you can hire out to “gig workers” who charge less than you. Outsource these nonessential activities, and mark up these services, generally 10 percent to 30 percent, and build this cost into your next proposal. Outsourcing the nonessential allows you to take on more work, multiply the value of your hours, and make more money.

The Customers Journey:

Using the template below, make a journey map of your consulting idea, and the experience you want to design for your potential client. Include elements in all three rows— the experiences, the feelings, and the magic moments. You might want to turn your paper sideways or get a large piece of paper for this— these maps tend to get long. Add as much detail as you can and make sure you map the Before, During, and After of the service or experience. And look for magic moments along the journey that can make your offering remarkable!



Client	Before	During	After
Activities			
Emotions			
Magic Moments			