

HERMAN®



**“Your previous employer says
you’re *unpredictable*.”**

Things I've Always Wanted to Do

*"If you can walk, you can dance.
If you can talk, you can sing."*

—Zimbabwean Proverb

*"As long as you're thinking anyway,
You might as well think big."*

—Donald Trump



TAKE A YEAR OF RETIREMENT NOW

You probably began your career thinking you would move from one organization to the next over about 30 years, getting to ever-larger challenges and increasing pay until you retired to your sailboat, if you lived so long. Ask yourself what's wrong with taking that year now. Go to that sailboat. Find a way to afford it. Plan ahead and you face the prospect of separation with some relish.

There are always a lot of things we would like to do. Books we'd like to read. Paths we'd like to walk. Streams we'd like to fish. Art projects to complete.

Make your list of things you would like to do, and that you would do if you didn't have to work. Consider taking a year

of retirement now, in mid-career, and do those things. But first, make your list. Make your list with things you'd like to learn, places you'd like to go, recreational things, educational goals, things you'd like to do with your kids. It's not necessary to limit it to 10 items. Many people have made such a list and run it to 300 or more items. Some then begin prioritizing the long list into the list for the next year and the next five years. It becomes a lifetime Goal Plan. Since this list is what you really want to do with the rest of your life, having this list is useful to your psyche. If the things on your list take money, the list might say why you are working after all.

Here's one guy's list of the things he wrote down in the first thirty seconds of the exercise.

THINGS I WANT TO DO:

- 1. Write a Novel**
- 2. Write a Professional Book**
- 3. Build a Solar House**
- 4. Learn to Play Piano Well**
- 5. Learn to Play Golf Well**
- 6. Sail Around the Greek Islands with My Spouse**
- 7. Have a Sailboat in San Diego**
- 8. Climb Mount Rainier**
- 9. Scuba Dive in Cozumel with Sons**
- 10. Have My Own Business**

I know many people who keep a lengthy list of lifetime goals and desires of things they want to do and review it often. Then, when the opportunity to do something that's on the list comes along, there's no hesitation in acting. They also know they won't live forever, and expect that at some point they won't be able to do some of these things, so they had better get to it.

It's been said that half of all the people who have ever lived on earth are alive today. So then statistically, each of us has a one in two chance of ever dying. But do you want to believe the statistical evidence in this case or do you want to believe your eyes? So, you'd better make that list and then get to it.

Once you've made your list, ask yourself this question: "What would I do if given two years to live?" That prioritizes your list. Take that list of items and put them at the top. Then ask "What would I do if given one year to live?" That makes a smaller list and the more important items are at the top. Then ask, "What would I do if given six months to live?" That's an even shorter list and it's absolutely your most important, highest priority goals. And it makes you want to get to those, doesn't it?

No matter how long you live, it's been said, you're going to leave this earth with a full in-basket. Things undone. But if you make yourself a set of lists like this, those things left to do will not be the most important things to you. You will have done the most important.

The exercise puts in perspective your life, your values, your life goals. Makes the termination or layoff much less a problem for you. Perspective does that.

PLAY

You may have always wanted to play the piano, but never seemed to have the time, or you were distracted by the pressures of your job. Think of losing your job and focusing your efforts three or four hours a day on learning how to play the piano well. You could do it. What a great sense of accomplishment that would be. Particularly at your advanced age. The mental health benefits would be exceptional. The part of the brain that is fed by piano lessons is not the same part as that used in management work. I don't know if that's right brain/left brain creativity versus logic or if it's a much more sophisticated subdivision of the brain. But I'm confident that the effort to learn the piano, while difficult, would be mentally refreshing; it's like resting a section of the brain that had been running on high for a long while.

All of us would like to play golf or tennis well. The same benefits hold as with the piano. But there are also the physical benefits. Physical exercise is a great stress reducer as is the mental change to piano lessons. So you can play, learn new skills, and build greater health at the same time.

It sounds so good, you might just quit working right now! "Fallback Position? Hell, that's my life plan."

MAKE MONEY WITH YOUR HOBBY

"The best revenge is living well":

—George Herbert



Do What You Love and The Money Will Follow is a book and a phrase that is popular today. It speaks to the fact that you can do what you want and live well, too. It can happen; you just have to have faith and confidence that it will.

LIVE OFF YOUR WITS: THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING ANYWAY

*“Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win
On fearing to attempt.”*

—Lucio, Measure for Measure

Look at all the changes that are occurring out there. Certainly, you can find something that you like doing, if only for a short time, that fits the needs of society. Call it recharge-the-batteries time. Call it a respite. But find something to do with your knowledge: consult, teach, start a business, write, or invent something.

Remember Thomas Edison. The conventional wisdom regards him as a pure researcher, sitting in a lab and tinkering until something was developed like the electric light bulb. But that's not how he worked. He had one of the first research and development labs. He instructed his people to think of what people needed, and then try to find a way to provide it. In that sense, he was more of a market analysis innovator than an inventor. But the inventor role is more the stuff of legend. Still he invented dozens of products.

Maybe you can find a way to provide something that society needs. Somebody had to develop the safety pin, Velcro,

suitcases on wheels, and everything else you can think of. Hop to it.

PUT YOUR SKILLS TO WORK

There are many opportunities out there for “Interim Work.” Can you be a supervisor, an advisor, a coach? A little like consulting, a short-term interim position can be a lot of fun. It can be a bit of a respite. It’s a great way to make new contacts, help support a new staff, and make new friends. Since my contacts tend to be in city governance, I’ve known several managers or executives who have done interim work and prefer it. Al Locke left the city of Kirkland, Washington, after serving 20 years as city manager. Since then he has served as interim manager for many local governments. He has found it an enjoyable way to provide service and keep his hand in. “I don’t work summers,” he declares. This type of thing is equally true of men and women in the private sector. With down-sized companies, the opportunities abound.

Some private consulting firms provide interim services around the country. PRIME is a firm on the east coast providing interim services, as does Waldron and Company on the west coast. There are many more, as temporary service and manpower agencies have exploded around the world. The Internet provides a host of resources that search engines will find.

Interim management and executive temping have become more popular and are considered legitimate ways to continue using knowledge gained in a career.

It happens in government, as well in the non-profit sector, and was invented in the for-profit sector, as part of the outsourcing approach. Whether your background is public or

private, non-profit or for-profit, there are interim positions to be had. Retired volunteers are often used by non-profits to fill vacant executive positions. The Senior Corps is a good example of the concept being institutionalized. Getting qualified people to fill positions that can't go a long time vacant is a critical issue in most organizations. You can try out many of them while you look for a permanent position. But you might get to be like Al Locke and choose interim positions for the rest of your career. The future of interim management is strong.

WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR YOURSELF?

It's important to integrate your goals with your values in any life planning or "futures exercise", in order to be meaningful for the long-term. A good way to do that is used in private business. Called "Woody-Woofy," for the WDYWFY near-acronym, the concept is all about What Do You Want For Yourself. It's what motivates you to keep going day after day. It's mental sustainability in the working environment.

One friend of mine, whose name will remain anonymous for reasons that will become obvious, followed this approach and wrote down what is important to him to keep him going. He keeps it in his Franklin Planner and refers to it daily, when he's in boring meetings, or waiting on someone who's not being very hospitable. Here's what his list is:

"THE PLACE I WANT TO WORK:

- *Environment with informal hierarchical structure*
- *Environment where both team-work and individually-based work is valued*

- *Fun, humor-filled*
- *Fast-paced, dynamic*
- *Uses cutting-edge technology*
- *Promotes a balance between personal life and work*
- *Recognizes accomplishments and quality work, especially through compensation and benefits structures*
- *Leadership with the vision to move the organization forward and the confidence to let it happen*
- *Trust*
- *Straightforward, low-key resolution of conflict*
- *Autonomy to achieve mission/goals with the support of leadership managing product, not process*
- *Ability to be creative, innovative, and continuously learning, developing new skills*
- *Variety in assignments, relatively few rote tasks*
- *Some travel, but not substantial*
- *Few evening and weekend commitments*
- *Enterprising, seeks new ways to add value to our customers*
- *Opportunities to develop mentoring or mutually-growth-oriented relationship with my boss*
- *Public service orientation*
- *Inspire others around me*
- *High expectations of me and those above and below”*

This listing is a good example of a thoughtful approach to what's important to you in the working environment. Different from the life planning lists, in that they look beyond the job,

WDYWFY looks specifically at what psychic rewards you want to get out of the job. Beyond money. The exercise requires you to ponder and really think about what's important in the working environment to keep you mentally alive and to keep the creative juices flowing. Many working environments are not supportive, are even stifling, and as you prepare your fallback position, what you need and want is important to know. If you're not working within your WDYWFY environment, in large part, then you're likely to be in trouble at some point.

WHAT YOU DON'T WANT

*“Lord, please let me die peacefully in my sleep,
like my grandfather,
and not like his screaming passengers.”*

—Internet prayer

There are things in life that we know we don't want. There are people we know we don't want to work with. There are bosses we know we don't want to work for. There are jobs we know we don't want to work at.

In other words, it's very clear and we're very certain as to what it is we **don't want**. That's a list we also need to make. It, too, is a life-clarifying list, a value clarification list that helps us plan our future.

Make yourself a list of those things you know you don't want. (This is not like the high school senior who, when asked what they want to do in life, say, “I just want to be happy.” That's the unexamined prescription for happiness that will never be achieved. I suspect it's most often expressed by an

adolescent that sees parents arguing and figures they're not happy, not understanding that some conflict is natural and the ability to work it out with each other in a marriage is a form of happiness.)

You make your own list, but some of the things that I've heard people say they don't want are provided here to give you a leg up in thinking about what you don't want are these:

- *A job with no room for growth.*
- *A boring job, routine tasks done over and over.*
- *A boss who is inconsistent or can't make a decision.*
- *A boss who is unreasonable.*
- *A boss who doesn't treat people right.*
- *A boss who doesn't respect my need to decide when I can go on vacation.*
- *A boss that doesn't trust me to know when I'm too sick to work.*

You make your own list. Don't use this one. The point is, it's just as important to know what we don't want as it is to know what we want.

GOAL SPECIFIC DIRECTION

"Dr. Phil", Phillip C. McGraw in his book, **Strategies**, talks about the *Seven Step Strategy* for acquiring your goals.

1. **"Express your goal in terms of specific events or behaviors.**
2. **"Express your goal in terms that can be measured.**
3. **"Assign a timeline to your goal.**

4. **“Choose a goal you can control.**
5. **“Plan and program a strategy that can get you to your goal.**
6. **“Define your goal in terms of steps.**
7. **“Create accountability for your progress toward your goal.”**

This seven-step strategy is not unlike the other exercises in this book about knowing what you want and organizing to get it. His seven steps are included here to expand and reinforce the approach you need to find a fallback position.

