

CAREER SUCCESS

without a

REAL JOB

THE CAREER BOOK
FOR PEOPLE
TOO SMART
TO WORK IN
CORPORATIONS



ERNIE J. ZELINSKI

author of the international best-seller

How to Retire Happy, Wild, and Free

Career Success Without a Real Job

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101 Really Important Things You Already Know, But Keep Forgetting

Career Success Without a Real Job

The Career Book for People Too
Smart to Work in Corporations

Ernie J. Zelinski


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Preface

This is the second edition of this book, which was first called *Real Success Without a Real Job: There Is No Life Like It*. As you can see, I have changed the title somewhat and the subtitle a lot for this new edition. The biggest change, however, is in Chapter 7, which was originally devoted to friendship. Although friendship is an important element of success, I decided that a chapter on how to make money on the Internet would better serve people who would like to make a living without a real job.

The idea for this book came to me shortly after a friend announced that it was seven years since he started his government job. This surprised me — I didn't realize it had been so long. We had met in a coffee shop more than a decade earlier when he was unemployed and I was just starting my publishing and writing career.

A career is a job that has gone on too long.

— Jeff MacNelly

Moments after my friend mentioned how long he had worked for the government, I realized that in October of that year it would be twenty-five years since I was fired from my engineering job at a public utility for taking two months of unapproved vacation. Better still, I realized that it would be twenty-five years since I had a real job.

Talk about career success without a real job — for me anyway! That called for a grand celebration with my paying the entire bill. I even felt compelled to locate the manager who fired me so I could thank him and invite him to the celebration. I had not seen the man since he liberated me from corporate life.

Alas, although I did contact him through a former colleague, my ex-boss had already made other plans for the evening of my celebration. Ironically, a few years back I had run into his successor, who told me — with a mischievous smile on his face — that he had bought my ex-boss a copy of my book *The Joy of Not Working* for a retirement gift.

Let's jump back to the fateful day that I was terminated from my engineering job. I was quite flabbergasted, indeed, close to being traumatized. I should have known at the time, however, that I was destined for much greater heights. A few years later I realized that, from a career perspective, my firing was the best thing that ever happened to me.

What's more, getting fired was great for other aspects of my life, including my mental and physical health. As I tell my friends, "The

two best things I ever did for my well-being were to quit smoking and to get axed from my last real job, never to return to another.”

The fact that I spent a princely sum to celebrate my not having worked as an engineer after having been fired twenty-five years

Yet it is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top.

— Virginia Woolf

earlier will surprise many people — particularly engineers. Not all engineers, however, given that there are many who would love to exit the field. Like a significant number of workers in all professions, a lot of engineers don't like how they earn their living and despise corporate life. Their personal lives may appear just fine to onlookers, but they

suffer their jobs badly and with silent indignity. Indeed, there are many so-called successful people — engineers, lawyers, executives, and even doctors — in this sad and bleak situation who would like a more joyful career.

Regardless of what profession you are in, you may also want to leave your line of work for something better. Particularly if you were intensely drawn to this book, a corporation is likely not the best place for you to hang out for the rest of your work life. The purpose of this book is to inspire people like you to reclaim their creativity, their freedom, and their lives.

In short, *Career Success Without a Real Job* is for individuals who:

- ◆ Are heavily committed to having “fun” in their work and want more freedom in their lives
- ◆ Want a more relaxed work environment
- ◆ Want no set hours and a lot of latitude in how their work gets done
- ◆ Want to avoid becoming just another cog who works for a faceless giant
- ◆ Want to find their own important mission, true calling, or passionate pursuit
- ◆ Know — without any doubt in their minds — that they are organizationally averse
- ◆ Want to work at a dream job or run an unconventional business
- ◆ Want to gain courage to leave the corporate world forever
- ◆ Want to live an extraordinary life that is the envy of the corporate world

This is largely an inspirational book; it does not provide a specific road map for choosing your perfect unconventional career and making a million dollars at it in the next several years. Plain and simple, this book can't because a massive amount of detail the equivalent of many encyclopedias would be required. I include many recommendations for further reading throughout, however, that will provide more valuable information on how you can attain career success without a real job in your own special way.

The success principles emphasized in this book are the ones I have followed to make a decent living as an author and self-publisher by working only four or five hours a day. What a great profession! Why work at a real job when I can get away with doing what I have been doing for so long? No doubt some people will say I am lucky. True, but I am lucky in the sense that I had the courage to do what had to be done to get where I am today.

Others will point out that everyone can't do what I am doing. True again, but I didn't allow my mind to make up this flimsy excuse for not doing it. Neither did Abraham Lincoln, Bill Clinton, or Barack Obama make up the excuse that not everyone can be president of the United States. Otherwise, they would never have become president themselves.

Besides, not everyone can work in a real job. If we use an excuse, we should use it in a positive way to better our position in life, and not in a negative way to justify an unpleasant situation. Since not everyone can have a conventional job, why not be one of the prosperous individuals with an unconventional job similar to mine? This way you will find success, prosperity, and happiness on your own terms.

Throughout the book I use the term "unreal job," which is loosely defined as any work you joyfully perform for a living with a lot of flexibility in your working hours, rather than a traditional job, which requires that you work in a rigid corporate environment with fixed hours. I also talk about starting an "unconventional business," which requires few or no employees, has low start-up costs, and does not demand that you work the long hours that a traditional business requires.

What advice would you give to someone just starting a new job in a large corporation?

Never let your boss know that you exist!



I believe you are your work.
Don't trade the stuff of
your life, time, for nothing
more than dollars. That's a
rotten bargain.

— Rita Mae Brown

I can sing the praises of the success principles in this book because these principles have worked for me. These same principles can work for millions of other people. Indeed, you will read about several people in much different fields than mine who have left the corporate world for good. The great news is they are living lifestyles that are about as good as anyone can imagine.

No doubt the principles in this book will not work for everyone. One reason is that many people apparently don't want freedom; they would rather be imprisoned by organizations that tell them what to do, when to do it, how to do it. As Lord Boyd-Orr once said, "If people have to choose between freedom and sandwiches, they will take sandwiches."

If you are one of those mundane people who would select sandwiches over personal freedom, career success without a real job is definitely not for you. On the other hand, if you are trapped in the corporate world as the majority is, but would like to be liberated, then the success principles herein can inspire and help you to create a much more rewarding lifestyle for yourself.

You will have to change your thinking, however. Not only a bit — totally! Money, material possessions, and secure jobs don't make the world go around for truly successful individuals. What does? Purpose! Family! Friends! Challenging projects! Creative satisfaction! Job gratification! Spiritual fulfillment! And, above all, personal freedom!

This leads us into a major premise of this book: You can't be genuinely prosperous unless you have personal freedom. You will have attained true freedom in this world when you can get up in the morning when you want to get up; go to sleep when you want to go to sleep; and in the interval, work and play at the things you want to work and play at — all at your own pace. The great news is that not having a real job — and creating your own unreal job instead — allows you the opportunity to attain this freedom.

If you are still not in the least way dissuaded from reading further, you already have enough presence of mind to recognize that career success and happiness are possible without having a real job. Obviously your aim is much higher than simply working at a conventional job, and you believe in being paid for your creative results rather than actual time spent in a cubicle or office. Keep reading — this gets much better.

1

Life Without a Real Job Will Set You Free

Corporate Employment Is So Last Year!

Imagine that you are at your high-school reunion where former classmates are bragging about how successful they are or are about to become. Brock, the science graduate, talks about the mining company he manages and how he got a \$120,000 bonus last year in addition to the Porsche Boxster. Bella, who has been focusing her energy on international development projects with the government, is about to spend \$58,000 on tuition for a two-year MBA program that she thinks will increase her income from \$95,000 to over \$200,000 a year.

After listening to several people boast about their careers and how much their mansions are worth, you realize that either only the jet-setting moneyed class goes to reunions, or there is a lot of lying going on. Eventually the group curiously looks at you, wearing your T-shirt that says “Organizationally Averse.” Someone asks, “What do you do now and where do you live?”

You smile and say, “Actually, to millions of us, corporate employment is so last year! I don’t like working for corporations and like to work only when I want. Although I dropped out of university, I live in Vancouver half the time and spend the six coldest months of the year in Costa Rica.”

“So, how can you do this?” someone else quips. “Did you inherit a couple million or win it in a lottery?”

With a wry look of amusement, you answer, “No, I have never had any rich relatives and I never buy lottery tickets. So I have to work for a living, but I am a

Men go fishing all their lives
without knowing that it is not
fish they are after.

— Henry David Thoreau

Every day I get up and look through the *Forbes* list of the richest people in America. If I'm not there, I go to work.

— Robert Orben

one-person show specializing in the information business. This allows me to work on my own schedule — sometimes two hours a day and sometimes seven, other times on a whim taking three or four days off. I love a lifestyle without much pressure and with the freedom to do things on my own without the hassle of partners, colleagues, or employees.”

“Sounds like a dream job,” retorts Henry, a hugely successful dentist who lives in California and has just purchased a house worth three million dollars. “What about money? Can you make a decent living doing this? I read somewhere that many people who are self-employed live a pauper’s life.”

“Some do, many don’t,” you reply. “The fact that a person doesn’t have a university degree and is self-employed doesn’t mean that he or she can’t make a decent living. Although I don’t make as much as some of you do — not yet, anyway — I do make a much better income than the average person. More important, however, is the fact that I love what I do and I have my freedom. To me this is priceless, given that I am not the corporate type.”

Is this starting to sound like too much of an unattainable fantasy to you? It shouldn’t. If it is, you are likely too programmed with society’s meaning of traditional success and need to experience a paradigm shift to realize that you can escape the corporate world and still make a good living. Better still, life without a real job will set you free.

Perhaps you took the fast track to life. Since high school, heck, maybe since junior high, you had a plan. You visited colleges and applied for scholarships. You graduated with honors from high school, won more scholarships when you took your undergraduate program, and then attended graduate school, maybe even earned your doctorate.

When you entered the world of work, you couldn’t help thinking that the words “My future’s so bright, I gotta wear shades” from some obscure song applied to you. You began your career life exactly as planned. Everything went according to schedule and every year virtually every item on your career itinerary became a reality.

Success has made failures of many men.

— Cindy Adams

Today you have a decent-paying job, the bigger-than-normal cubicle — maybe even an expensively furnished office with a great view — and are

peacefully coexisting with others in your office. There is one major problem, however: You are not happy in your work environment. Put another way, the thrill is gone — if it was ever there to begin with!

Perhaps you're questioning yourself and your place in this world more than ever before. Perhaps you are troubling yourself with intense self-interrogation. Perhaps you are filled with anxiety and fear. And maybe you believe you are the only one in your age group who feels so dissatisfied. Believe me, regardless of your age group, you are not.

A lot of evidence exists that many workers in North America are terribly dissatisfied. For instance, a recent survey by *The Globe and Mail* asked its readers "Are you suffering from career inertia?" The results:

- ◆ 33 percent answered, "Yes, I can barely drag myself into the office."
- ◆ 23 percent chose, "Yes, but I can't be bothered to look for another job."
- ◆ 25 percent selected, "No, I find ways to stay engaged with my work."
- ◆ 19 percent picked, "No, career inertia is just an excuse to be lazy."

What makes these results particularly fascinating is that most of the readers of *The Globe and Mail* are highly educated, are well-paid, and work in prestigious jobs. Yet at least 56 percent of the readers are suffering from career inertia. No doubt the figure is much higher for employees as a whole in North America. Indeed, several career consultants claim that up to 70 percent of all Canadian and American employees would escape the confines of the corporation if they found something they loved to do and knew how to pursue it.

Perhaps the people suffering from career inertia are the most likely to show up at school or university class reunions, so they get to tell others how much "success" they have attained, at least in the traditional sense of the word. The question here is to what end are these people trying to achieve all those

What is it that you like doing? If you don't like it, get out of it, because you'll be lousy at it.

— Lee Iacocca

Oh, you hate your job? Why didn't you say so? There's a support group for that. It's called Everybody, and they meet at the bar.

— Drew Carey

things that define success? Another question: How much are these people deluding others and, even more importantly, themselves?

Apparently not everyone deludes themselves. In a book called *The Great Divide* (Avon Books, 1989) by the legendary Studs Terkel, American worker Isabelle Kuprin talked about her job: “I’m a copywriter for an ad agency. It involves being a total asshole. I do it for the money, it’s easy and horrible. I do nothing good for society.” No doubt there are millions of people just as dejected about their jobs in today’s corporate world, particularly if they work just for the money.

Clearly, one of life’s biggest traps today is working hard for money, clinging to the illusion of job security, looking forward to retirement to make life a lot better. Sadly, fear — the fear of not paying bills, the fear of not being able to work for themselves, and the fear of not having enough money for retirement — keeps most people working at their corporate jobs. The darkest side of this fear is that it keeps employees in the vicious cycle of commute, work, commute, sleep, commute, work, commute, sleep, and so on.

Nine to five — what a way to make a living! We should pay heed to the song “Nine to Five” by Dolly Parton that was featured in the 1980s comedy film of the same name. In the film Parton and her two co-workers, played by Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin, teach their jerk-of-a-boss a lesson. The song, however, reminds us that the daily grind of a regular job can suck big time.

What fascinates me most about this field of business is how we stay awake all day conducting it.



Regular media reports indicate that many workers, including well-paid professionals and executives, are experiencing low morale, burnout, and a diminished quality of life. Indeed, every year brings another new study concluding that people are more stressed out and less satisfied than they were the year before.

In the midst of it all, good news awaits, however. Perhaps you have seen the movie *The Great Escape*. There is an even greater escape you can make — the escape from corporate life. The reasons to do so are many. The typical workplace is demeaning to the human soul, particularly to the creative and independent soul. So is looking for a job, everything from drafting up résumés, sending out résumés, not getting replies, the interview process itself, and the formalities that come with starting a new job.

Of course, after working at a job for a year or two things don’t

necessarily get any better. This comes from the Idler website: “With very few exceptions the world of jobs is characterized by stifling boredom, grinding tedium, poverty, petty jealousies, sexual harassment, loneliness, deranged co-workers, bullying bosses, seething resentment, illness, exploitation, stress, helplessness, hellish commutes, humiliation, depression, appalling ethics, physical fatigue and mental exhaustion.”

The typical work environment — a world without career satisfaction and personal fulfillment — is likely not a place you want to be for any length of time. Maybe you have a job and are looking for a better one. You will discover that when you apply for a job that appears better than yours, a thousand other people have already applied. When the thrill of their jobs is long gone, many people look for a new one. They think that a new work environment will actually make them happier. Most often it doesn't.

Then there are those who think that freedom is achieved by being promoted to a management position. Wish them luck. The promotion-in-waiting more often than not is trouble-in-waiting. In this regard, it is worth pondering the words of Robert Frost: “By working faithfully eight hours a day you may eventually get to be a boss and work twelve hours a day.”

Perhaps the answer is to find some way to like the job that you presently have. Good luck to you as well. It will just take you a lot longer to realize that you and your job were not a match made in heaven. Even if you trick yourself into liking your job, you are likely to encounter situations such as your office mate bathes only whenever there is a full moon, your boss expects an immediate response to his weekend e-mails, and you don't get a raise even after your creative breakthrough saves your company a million dollars or two.

In this day and age, if you want an office with a great view, I suggest that you make the great escape. Become self-employed like I am and perform most of your work on a laptop in various coffee hangouts. This way you can have many different interesting views and not just be confined to one. Of course, there are hundreds of other alternatives for escaping the corporate world other than what I have done to make my great escape.

Dear, never forget one little point. It's my business. You just work here.

— Elizabeth Arden

I've been promoted to middle management. I never thought I'd sink so low.

— Tim Gould

Best of all, there are many fantastic reasons not to have a real job! Many reasons will be given throughout the book; for now here are the ones that initially made my top-ten list:

Top Ten Reasons to Have an Unconventional Job

1. Although they will never admit it, your ex-boss and former co-workers will be green with envy.
2. You can get up at the “crack of noon” every day instead of the “crack of dawn.”
3. After you get up, you can wear a T-shirt that says “Too Prosperous to Do Mornings.”
4. When you don’t have a real job, “multitasking” takes on a new meaning, such as working happily and leisurely on your laptop at Starbucks and watching attractive members of the opposite sex at the same time.
5. When someone new asks what your real job is, you can say, “I am too prosperous to have a real job; I have an unreal job instead.”
6. Not having a real job will really irk all your relatives (and, better still, your in-laws too).
7. *Late Night with David Letterman* can be the first TV program you watch in the evening instead of the last.
8. You don’t have to read Dilbert every day because you don’t relate to it anymore.
9. You no longer have to witness the turkeys escape the corporate ax while the eagles either leave or get fired.
10. On your death bed, regardless of your age, your last words will be: “Hey, I don’t want to go just yet. The thing I enjoy most about life is working at my unreal job!”

I have to admit that the typical workplace is not a total waste of time if you are willing to stoop to its level. After twenty-five years of happily and successfully being without a real job, I am not. An unreal job such as the one I have created for myself really rocks.

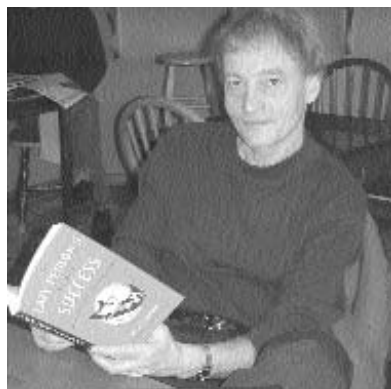
You don’t resign from these jobs; you escape from them.

— Dawn Steel

In my view, 95 percent of traditional jobs can’t even come close to providing the freedom I enjoy. The good news is that you can also create an unreal job that you love and that provides you with a good measure of freedom.

About the Author

Ernie J. Zelinski is an authority on early retirement and solo-entrepreneurship. His recent books include *101 Really Important Things You Already Know, But Keep Forgetting*, the bestseller *How to Retire Happy, Wild, and Free* (over 125,000 copies sold and published in seven foreign languages), and the international bestseller *The Joy of Not Working* (over 250,000 copies sold and published in seventeen languages).



Photograph by Greg Gazin

Ernie has negotiated ninety-seven book deals with publishers in twenty-seven countries for his various books — which have now sold over 650,000 copies worldwide. Feature articles about Ernie and his books have appeared in major newspapers including *USA TODAY*, *Oakland Tribune*, *Boston Herald*, *The Washington Post*, *Toronto Star*, and *Vancouver Sun*.

Ernie occasionally speaks on the topics of early retirement, solo-entrepreneurship, and applying creativity to business and leisure. He recently spoke to over 2,000 executives and scholars at the National Turkish Society for Quality Convention in Istanbul.

Ernie likes to hear from the readers of his books. His e-mail address is vip-books@telus.net and his mailing address is:

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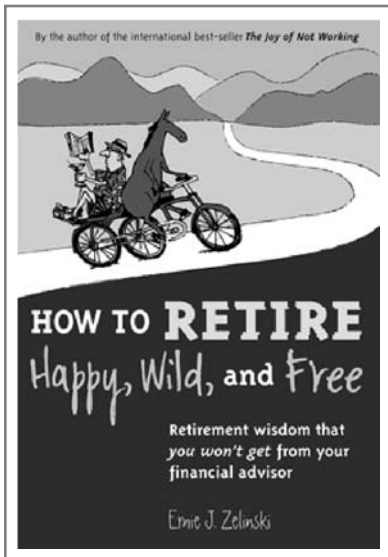
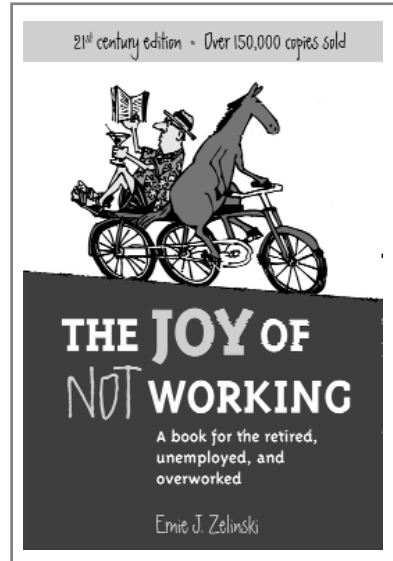
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www.the-money-cafe.com
www.retirement-cafe.com
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Irresistible Books by Ernie Zelinski

THE JOY OF NOT WORKING: A Book for the Retired, Unemployed, and Overworked — 21st Century Edition

Ernie Zelinski could change your view of the world forever. Ernie has already taught more than 225,000 people what *The Joy of Not Working* is all about: learning to live every part of your life — employment, unemployment, retirement, and leisure time alike — to the fullest. With this revised and expanded edition, you too can join the thousands of converts and learn to thrive at both work and play. Illustrated by eye-opening exercises, thought-provoking diagrams, and lively cartoons, *The Joy of Not Working* will guide you to enjoy life like never before.



HOW TO RETIRE HAPPY, WILD, AND FREE: Retirement Wisdom That You Won't Get from Your Financial Advisor

With its friendly format, positive tone, and lively cartoons, *How to Retire Happy, Wild, and Free* is for those individuals who absolutely, positively want to read *The World's Best Retirement Book*. Nancy Conroy of the Association of Pre-Retirement Planners raves: "*How to Retire Happy, Wild, and Free* is optimistic, practical, humorous, and provocative AND comprehensively addresses the many issues impacting individuals as they think about their retirement." *How to Retire Happy, Wild, and Free* has sold over 100,000 copies and has been published in 7 foreign languages.

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Career Success and Personal Freedom — You Can Have Both!

Career success is much more than having a real job and earning a decent income. Real career success is truly enjoying what you do for a living and having the personal freedom to perform your work virtually any time you want.

This one-of-a-kind career guide challenges and inspires you to:

- Create your own dream job or operate an unconventional business.
- Find your own important mission, true calling, or passionate pursuit with which you can make a great living.
- Gain courage to escape the corporate world so that you don't have to spend the rest of your life trapped in a cubicle.
- Be creative and have fun in your work.
- Restructure your life so that it has meaning, direction, and joy.
- Take charge of your physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual well-being.
- Experience true personal freedom in all areas of your life.
- Above all, get the most out of your life — personally and professionally!

This revolutionary book is for those millions of organizationally averse people who would like to break free of corporate life so that they have complete control over their lives. Throughout the book you will read about several ordinary individuals who have attained extraordinary success without a real job. International best-selling author Ernie Zelinski, whose books have sold over 550,000 copies worldwide, also uses experiences from his own life to show how the powerful success principles on the pages within can help you joyfully avoid the shackles of the corporate world for the rest of your life.

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