

# Dare to Dream: Creating the Career That's Right for You

by Karen Colligan

We spend 40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year, for 40 years at work. That is 80,000 hours of our life. Are you spending those hours in a career that is fulfilling to you? Does it align with who you are today, and what you want for tomorrow?

If not, then it's time you dared to dream—about a new career, new work or a new way of doing work.

But how do you begin? Start by asking yourself three simple questions:

1. Where am I?
2. Where do I want to be?
3. How do I get there?

Most of us have done some work assessing who we are, looking at our work history and then putting together a plan, based on our past experience. It is important to consider the past—after all, it's a part of us. But to initiate the dream, we need to focus on who we are today and what we want for tomorrow. Use whatever information you have accumulated and build on it. Think of it as a renewal process, a time to create your future—a revitalizing juncture in your life.

This process can, at times, seem overwhelming. However, if you break it down into smaller steps, and think of it as an opportunity to take care of yourself and get clear about what YOU want, it becomes much easier. Remember...it is all about you...

The most important thing is to get started. Here's a 5-Step Model that will put you on the path to a career that is right for you.

## **Step 1: Taking Inventory**

This step will help you clarify who you are and what you want. This is a snapshot of who you are today. Take a few minutes to identify three items in each of the following categories:

**Skills:** What are three skills you know you want to use in your next work experience? Think about a past job that you absolutely loved. What were the skills you used there?

**Values:** What are three must-haves for your next opportunity? Think about what you know you are unwilling to compromise on. This is very important because it truly reflects who you are.

**Natural talents:** Natural talents are those abilities that are so much a part of you that you forget about them until someone says, "you make that look so easy." What are three of your natural talents?

**Show Stoppers:** What are three internal barriers that have prevented you from getting to where you want to be? If you acknowledge them now, you can watch out for them as you move forward.

## Step 2: Creating You

Now it's time to articulate what you are looking for in your career.

Review the work you did in Taking Inventory. Now that you have a picture of who you are and what you want, how do you convey that clearly and concisely to others?

One way is via your resume. When was the last time you updated it? Does it reflect who you are now and what you determined in your Inventory work? If not, it's time to update it.

## Step 3: Designing Your Target Campaign

This is about time, contacts and developing your plan of action.

How much time can you spend working on your dream career? Ten hours a week? 25 hours a week? Whatever number you come up with, it's important that you stick to it. Yes, finding or creating the work you want takes time, but it's time well-spent. It's time invested in you.

Create a list of people you want to contact. Think of friends, relatives, fellow alumnae, colleagues and ex-colleagues. You will be amazed at how many people you know. More than 82% of the people who find work find it through their networks.

## Step 4: Getting Out There

Now it's time to start telling people what you want so you can move from creating the dream to living the dream.

You've worked hard to get to this point. Now begin to engage other people in your quest by sharing your message, your goals, who you are. The people you talk to will lead you to other people and will spark new ideas. This will help you further refine what you want, and will create opportunities for you. Remember to evaluate each opportunity in light of the picture you developed in the Inventory step. Does it map to who you are today? If not... keep looking...don't give up on your dream.

## Step 5: Taking Charge of Your Career

Don't stop now! Continually be asking yourself "what's next?"

Once we find something that fits, it's easy to become complacent. The "must-haves" are replaced by "not-so-bads" and our sharply-focused picture begins to fade.

Set periodic reminders for yourself—monthly, quarterly, annually—to evaluate whether your current work aligns with your values, leverages your skills and reflects who you are today. Keep creating, refining and moving toward your dream.

*"All our dreams can come true...if we have the courage to pursue them." —Walt Disney*

Karen Colligan, the founder and president of PeopleThink, Inc., specializes in developing high-performance individuals, teams and leaders. As a consultant, facilitator and coach, Karen's work is focused on inspiring people to discover and apply their natural talents, skills and interests to create the career they want. Karen's full-service career-planning program, *The Get Real Guide to Your Career*, is a proven system that directs individuals on the path to a career that will be more fulfilling, make better use of their skills and allow them to do what they love. For more information, visit [www.TheGetRealGuide.com](http://www.TheGetRealGuide.com).