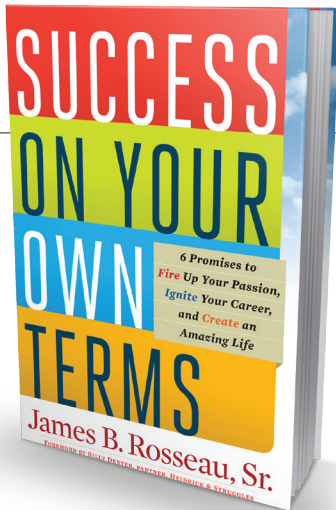


Success on Your Own Terms

6 Promises to Fire Up Your Passion, Ignite Your Career, and Create an Amazing Life

by James B. Rosseau, Sr.



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SUCCESS Points

A few things you'll learn from this book:

- How to dig up long-buried dreams
- Why passion is essential for success—and how to find yours
- What it means to perform to progress rather than go for perfection
- How helping others often equates to helping yourself
- Why giving is so important

Creating Destiny

How Not to Settle for Less than What You Really Want

QUICK OVERVIEW

With a dream of becoming a CEO, James Rosseau, Sr., chose not to settle for what others in his inner-city neighborhood believed possible. In fact, his passion became showing others what was possible... and helping them achieve their dreams. In *Success on Your Own Terms*, Rosseau challenges readers to search out their passions, embrace their dreams and create a plan of action to make them a reality. Interweaving his personal stories with the personal-development lessons he offers, the author shows it's possible to start at the bottom and climb all the way to the corner office—without losing sight of one's principles.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE

Do you know your story? In *Success on Your Own Terms*, Rosseau says that stories are a way to open the door for conversation. Mentally preparing to share your story—where you came from, how you achieved success, what dreams and passions drive you—can make it easy to engage and even effectively self-promote when opportunities arise. Why not take some time this week to consider your history and your dreams for the future? Write down your thoughts and consider how you might be able to connect your story to others' lives, needs and goals.

SUMMARY

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e've all heard the expression, "Life is too short!" I would counter that by saying, "Life is too long." What do I mean? Simply that life is too long *not* to be spending it doing something that you are genuinely passionate about.

Passion Sustains You

Money comes and money goes, but having a passion can sustain you. Passion is like having access to an endless supply of fuel. Passion is what makes you fall seven times and stand up eight; it's what makes Olympic athletes train for four hard years, go to the Olympics, not make the medal stand, and then go right back into training for four more years for the opportunity to do it again.

How do I know this to be true? The simple answer is because passion has sustained me for most of my life. Following the principles found in this book, over a 25-year career, I've become president of a *Fortune* 100 company. At the same time, no matter how successful I became in corporate life, I have continued my passionate pursuit of Christian hip-hop that combines all my passions: music, innovation and helping others.

Dreams Feed Your Passion

For as long as I can remember, I have enjoyed helping people achieve their dreams. Though I didn't necessarily think of it that way when I was younger, it was there. Early in my business career, at a celebratory event, I was talking to our company CEO, Skip, my boss's boss. He asked me, "Why do you push and work so hard to do all the things you are doing?" It was then that my second passion became crystal clear to me. My response was, "I want to be able to show people from the 'hood that you don't have to be a rapper, play basketball, or sell drugs to make it."

Ultimately, I revealed to him that one day I wanted to go back into the old neighborhood driving a Lexus, showing them that I achieved success in a different way. But, more importantly, I wanted to show people that it was achievable for them as well. I wanted to help people see their way out of what they probably considered the destiny they were stuck with.

How to Shift from Drift

What I learned in going through challenges and encountering roadblocks and obstacles, is that I have to be true to myself. These six promises are commitments that I've made to myself and mindfully put into practice in every situation that I've been in. My advice, from someone who has been there, is to make these six promises and keep them.

- 1. Embrace your passion.** Don't discount your dreams. Return to that childlike fascination you once had and find a way to spend your work and life passionately!
- 2. Perform to progress versus perfection.** Most of us have experienced the paralysis that often comes from perfection or the pursuit of it. Here is an alternative to the paralysis of perfection: what if you performed to progress toward your goals and dreams, celebrating each small step along the way? As I referenced before, passion is at the root of our promises. It is a key part of the larger process of fueling your progress. However the world doesn't reward dreamers for dreaming, but for doing. You must also perform at the highest possible level, seeking progress with each new skill set learned and action taken.

What if you performed to progress toward your goals and dreams, celebrating each small step along the way?

- 3. Promote with purpose.** Let people know who you are in a way that is personal and purposeful. No one enjoys the slick self-promoter. People will instead recognize and reward those who stand confidently in their strengths authentically and purposefully.
- 4. Parlay your platform.** Your "platform" is the station in life you've achieved thus far. It may not be where you want to be yet, but it's yours! It includes your network of friends, coworkers, your mentors, and even those bosses who partner with you to achieve your passions, just as you've helped them achieve theirs. Your platform is the sum total of all your efforts in honing your talents and skills. It's that sense of confidence and awareness you've grown into and developed by walking the path of your life, including insights gleaned from all your business experiences.
- 5. Put it into action.** I don't believe that opportunity knocks only once. I believe it knocks often. But we have to keep our eyes and ears open to see and hear it when it does! Often, opportunity stares us in the face and we're too busy working to notice. Instead, be alert and aware. Take action on the four steps that lead up to this one as earnestly and as often as possible.

4 Steps to Facing a Fear

1. See the beginning, middle, and end of the situation. I imagine myself going through it step by step.
2. Size up the situation and describe it.
3. Ask yourself, "How should I deal with this fear? Should I take it on or choose another path?"
4. Ask, "What is the worst that can happen?" Here, I imagine the worst possible outcome and how I would deal with it.

6. Practice philanthropy. Give. You can never go wrong with giving, even when nobody hears about it. Giving helps not just those whom you give to but also helps you find the purpose to give and give again. So many of us have benefited from the gifts of others, and you never know what your small, or even not-so-small, gift might mean to someone in need, be it a coworker, a friend, or even a boss. As you find success, make giving a habit commensurate with your earnings.

First and foremost, you are making these promises to yourself within the context of being the very best *you* possible. Not everyone is going to applaud you along the way as you fulfill that purpose. You have to create the expectation of success so that you have the motivation to draw from as you move forward.

Find comfort in committing to and fulfilling the promises you make to yourself. Others can't run the race for you. You can only run it for yourself. If that means turning around at the "finish" line and being the only one there to pat your back, then go on and pat it!

DIFFERENTIATION VERSUS PERFORMANCE

In his book *Mojo*, best-selling management and leadership author Dr. Marshall Goldsmith says that a great leader understands the difference between "smart" and "effective." He points out that smart people tend to work hard to show that they are very intelligent. However, emerging leaders soon discover that this approach doesn't work well as they continue to climb the corporate ladder. Peers will likely see them as boasters and so avoid interacting with them. The effective approach, on the other hand, is to engage with others by asking open-ended questions and sharing what matters most to them. In turn, these empathetic leaders become sought after for their ability to listen and connect well with peers. As author and Wharton professor Arthur Grant points out in his book *Give and Take*, these types of people will be seen as "Givers" versus "Takers." As such, they are ensured more success in their careers.

The following skills will help you maximize your own, as well as others' performance:

- **Self-awareness.** Be aware of your emotions and how they affect you and those around you. Take notice of what causes you stress and how you deal with it.
- **Self-expression.** This involves being able to express how you feel, both verbally and nonverbally. It is important that you can communicate openly, in an assertive and acceptable manner. If you find you have a hard time saying no, practice establishing boundaries and learn how to engage in healthy conflict. (*The Power of a Positive No* by William Ury offers great insights into this idea.)
- **Interpersonal relationships.** This skill involves developing and seeking relationships that are characterized by mutual trust, understanding, and consideration. Work on your ability to share what other people are going through (without getting caught up in the drama) and staying calm when others may show strong emotions.
- **Decision-making.** This is the ability to be objective by seeing things as they really are. You can solve problems objectively, and keep your emotions and reactions in check when dealing with input from others.

- **Stress tolerance.** This involves coping with difficult situations in a positive way. It is an attitude that is hopeful despite setbacks, and a viewpoint that strives to seek balance in all aspects—mental, emotional, and physical.

One way to think about progress is with differentiation and performance. This is about finding and pursuing an authentic way to distinguish yourself among your peers. It's about doing the unexpected or performing beyond the average or even choosing to take the squiggly line rather than the straight line. This last path is probably the most thought provoking.

ASK INSIGHTFUL QUESTIONS

Once I knew I wanted to be a CEO, I created a short list of folks I wanted to meet, each of whom I believed I could learn something from. The list originally included people such as Russell Simmons (of Def Jam and Phat Farm) and Clarence Otis, Jr. (CEO of Darden Restaurants). The list has grown through time and I haven't met most of the people I originally added to the list. However, creating the list prompted me to craft my story in case I got the chance to share it. I wanted to know what to tell them and what I would ask if I got 15 minutes of time with them. My list included people whose stories I wanted to hear so I could get a 360-degree view of the person. I didn't just want the headlines; I wanted to know about the pivotal moments of their lives. I wanted to learn about the challenges and failures too. I encourage you to make your own list of people you want to interview and what questions you would ask. Also, think about your own story and how that factors in. Here are some keys to creating an insightful exchange that allows you to self-promote without making it all about you.

- Be authentic and genuine.
- Be curious. Have an intellectual curiosity.
- Find value in others and in their experiences. Seek out those who you feel you can benefit from. When you do, they in turn find value in you, your experience, and story.
- Remember that this is an exchange.
- Ask questions about the job they do: How did you get into this business? Do you still like it? What did you do to become successful?

Creating a list of questions gives you a vision of what is possible and allows you to see how many different approaches there can be to get to

similar places. To hear a person's story is very engaging and a great way to get to know someone.

The backstory, the under-story, will

give you the inside view on how that public success came about. These stories are a way to find points of relevance and learn from them. There are hard and easy ways to learn. One of the phrases I always remember is this: experience is the best teacher, but wisdom is to learn from someone else's experience.

When you ask questions, have a point of view and be ready to share it. For example, have you been able to have a family and balanced lifestyle? What has gone into making you who you are, and what experiences and exposures have brought you to this moment?

Promoting with Purpose

Promoting with purpose is necessary in order to experience a whole-hearted embrace of your passion. When you promote with purpose, you deliberately reach out to others to share your story, make a connection, and listen to their stories. It is through making connections with others that you can learn from their experience and apply those lessons to your own life. The best way to promote with purpose is to remember:

- Everyone has something to contribute, so be curious with people. Get to know those around you, and be open to making conversations and sharing stories. People sometimes discredit others as not being useful, but the truth is that there is something to learn from everyone.
- Stories open doors of connection and engagement. Practice your story by making a list of influential people you would like to interview—the sky is the limit. Pick anyone you can think of whose journey might be helpful to learn more about. When you make your list, choose those who have a relevant connection to what you are trying to do or whose experiences will resonate with you. Write out your questions and think of how your story connects with theirs. This storytelling will act as a kind of “wisdom exchange.”
- Promoting with purpose starts by knowing your point of view. Knowing where you stand and being clear on how you got where

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you are will allow you to process other people's wisdom. Once you have a point of view, all you have to do is learn how to gather the wisdom from the stories that are shared with you. It will change every aspect of your life.

PUT IT INTO ACTION

New Year's resolutions such as losing weight or getting more organized often wither and die by the middle of February. This is because it takes time and continued effort for newer commitments to form into habits.

So the question becomes are you ready to commit. If you have a plan but aren't willing to see it through, what does it matter? One of my favorite examples of commitment and perseverance is the story of Rick and Dick Hoyt.

The story starts with Dick Hoyt's infant son Rick developing cerebral palsy as a result of his umbilical cord getting wrapped around his neck at birth. Today, precautions could most likely have prevented this tragic outcome. But this was in 1962 and, unfortunately, this was an outcome both Dick and his wife had to adjust to—a lifetime of caring for a dependent son. When doctors

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recommended that Rick should be institutionalized, they both adamantly refused. Instead, they took their son home to raise him as normally as they could.

Many parents would have never thought of getting their physically challenged son into a regular sporting activity. But this family was no ordinary one. What started as running one race turned into two and, from there, Rick Hoyt and his father kept going. Now, 1,000 marathons and triathlons, and 27 years later, this is a permanent and wonderful part of the Hoyt family's life. Rick, who is unable to talk or walk, graduated from high school and went on to Boston College. There he worked to earn a degree in special education. In fact, Rick was part of a team that developed the "Eagle Eyes" computer system for Boston College that helps him communicate.

Consider all of the work the Hoyt family has put into this: the training, the modifications to their equipment, and so on. I hope this story inspires you as you consider putting your plan into action.

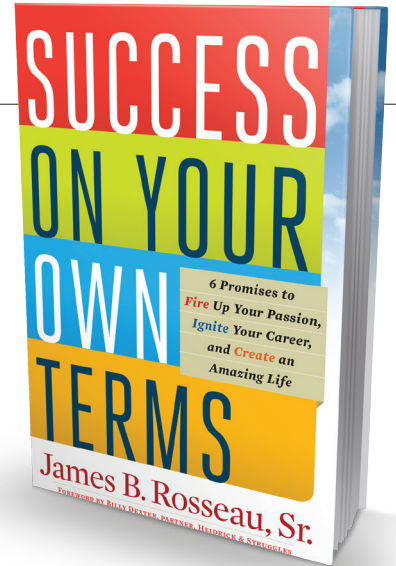
Tap Into Your Passion

How do you embrace your passion in life? How do you tap into those dreams and turn them into reality? You can start by keeping an open mind when you walk into different situations and meet new people. Be interested and develop a natural curiosity about the world around you. You will find that, as you listen to the stories that others share, parts of them will resonate within you, helping you tap into your own passions. Dig deep to figure out what drives you or lights a fire within you!

- Embrace your passion; don't discount your dreams. Return to that childlike fascination you had with whatever it was, and find a way to spend your work and life passionately.
- Seek out passion partners (accountability partners) who will hold you to keep the promises you make to yourself.
- Share your story but be selective. Carefully choose those who you feel share your passions and interests.
- Write your dreams down in a journal, and search for books or other resources to spark your interests.

About the Author

James Rosseau, Sr., currently serves as executive vice president and president of LegalShield B2B Solutions. Prior to that, he served as president of Allstate Affinity Solutions and as senior vice president at JP Morgan Chase Card Services. With more than 20 years of professional experience, his areas of leadership expertise include revenue generation, B2B relationship development, finance, technology, operations, human resources, and services.



Action Steps

Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you've learned. Here are a few questions, thoughts and activities to get you started.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you feel stuck in a job (or life) that you are not passionate about? 2. What is your passion—the thing for which you have a fascination and deep desire? 3. Do you know your story? If you had 15 minutes with a “power player” what would you tell them about yourself? 4. With your experiences and expertise, who can you help to achieve their dreams? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how committed are you to achieving your dreams? Does your activity reflect that commitment? 6. Have you ever missed an opportunity because you were “too busy” to notice it? What can you do to avoid that mistake in the future? 7. How can you get involved in supporting a cause greater than yourself, perhaps as a mentor, with financial support, or by sharing your time? |
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Recommended Reading

*If you enjoyed the summary of **Success on Your Own Terms**, you may also want to check out these titles:*

Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell

Mojo by Marshall Goldsmith

Power Questions by Andrew Sobel

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