

THE PURPOSE PROJECT

a handbook for bringing meaning to life at work



CAROLYN TATE

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THE PURPOSE PROJECT

“ There’s a crack, a crack in everything.
That’s how the light gets in. ”
- Leonard Cohen

There’s more than a crack in the state of our world today. It’s more like a chasm that’s too wide to ignore. It’s letting in a piercing light that’s bringing humanity to a tipping point and it’s heralding the dawn of a new age - *The Human Age* – the age where meaning is fast becoming the new money.

We’re now asking ourselves life’s most vital, yet deeply uncomfortable questions. What really matters to me beyond money and material goods? Am I achieving my highest potential? Am I doing work that is meaningful to me and in service to others? What’s the contribution I have to make and the legacy I wish to leave?

In other words, what is my *why*? What is my purpose?

For many of us, doing work that fulfills our purpose seems like an impossibility. We’ve bought into the erroneous belief that we must flee our job (and life) to go in search of our *why* in some other job or company or as an entrepreneur.

The Purpose Project will bust that myth. It will help you unearth your purpose starting right where you are, right now, with all that you have, no matter where you work. Whether you’re an employee, business owner or student, this book will help you turn your dreaming into doing through adopting your own *Purpose Project*.

For many of us, doing work that fulfills our purpose seems like an impossibility. We’ve bought into the erroneous belief that we must flee our job (and life) to go in search of our *why* in some other job or company or as an entrepreneur.

The Purpose Project is also a handbook for the *Purpose Activists* in organisations – the ones who are passionate about balancing the

imperative of profit with the imperative of purpose in order to create more humane workplaces.

It's time for us each to take responsibility for advancing *The Human Age* by bringing meaning to life at work.

If not you, who? If not now, when?

With love,

Carolyn

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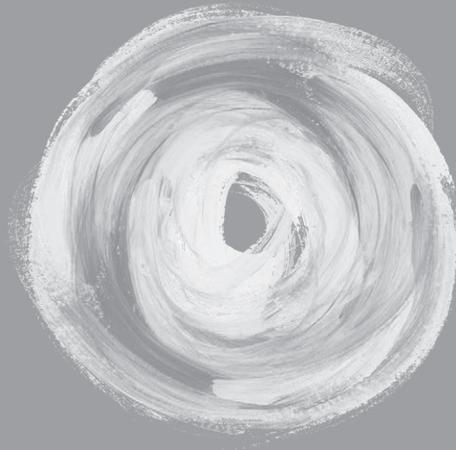
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INTRODUCTION



MY PURPOSE JOURNEY

“ *Writing is the only thing that, when I do it, I don't feel I should be doing something else.* ”

- Gloria Steinem

I truly am at my happiest when writing. I never feel like I should be doing something else. Distractions are rare and I almost always achieve my daily word count.

That doesn't mean the words are always perfect. Often they're pretty tragic, I suspect. Funnily enough, it simply doesn't matter to me. My job is just to do the work, to get up every day and write like no one will ever read my words and then worry about them later.

My job is to take action to fulfil my highest purpose of writing books that truly matter.

That's what happens when you're 'on purpose' and doing work you love. The absolute priority is to get the job done, to strive for completion not perfection.

But, it's been a long and often arduous journey to get to this point.

In 2010, after a 20-year marketing career in the corporate world and in my own business, I came to the great realisation that I no longer had a passion for my profession.

So just like that, I gave it all up. I sold my home, gave away all my possessions, closed my business and went to live in beautiful Aix-en-Provence in the south of France with my son Billy, who was 12 at the time.

For six glorious months, while Billy went to the International Bilingual School of Provence, I set about recovering my health and wellbeing and rediscovering my spirituality and creativity.

This time in France was a pivotal point in my life. Mostly because it was the first time I'd ever taken time out to deeply question my *raison d'être* particularly with regard to my future livelihood. It was a time of deep, and at times, uncomfortable contemplation.

My work story is not unlike millions of other people's stories. Like many of us, I'd 'fallen into' my career without ever consciously choosing it.

In 1980, at the age of 18, I was living in Mt Gambier in rural South Australia. Despite an inner calling to become a teacher, I joined the local branch of the Commercial Bank of Australia, soon to become Westpac. In reality, it was the money that lured me there and the promise of promotion and prosperity that kept me there – not an excitement for the world of finance.

It was, however, an incredible learning ground, giving me the opportunity to fulfil a whole range of roles in branch banking, sales, training and finally marketing around 1990 which led to marketing management roles in Papua New Guinea and Westpac's Olympic sponsorship.

After 17 years at Westpac, I went to work with the investment bank Merrill Lynch as a marketing manager. It seemed that I was destined to have a lifelong career as a marketer.

Then not long after, in 2001 my life took a drastic about-turn. My marriage ended, Billy and I moved house and I quit my job to become a business owner. I chose to transfer my corporate marketing skills into my own business as a marketing consultant and teacher.

Still, I didn't question whether marketing was 'the thing' I was being called to do. It took me nine years of working in my own marketing business before it finally hit me in 2010 that I'd lost all enthusiasm for the profession.

This painful realisation was one of the catalysts for a radical decision to give everything up and start over again – in France. (A course of action that I don't necessarily recommend by the way, and one of the reasons for this book.)

In France, where we knew no one and couldn't speak the language, I was forced to be open to everything and attached to nothing. I embraced being in the present and going with the flow. I was free to be me – and write.

With the support of *The Artist's Way* (a book by Julia Cameron designed to help you discover your creative self), my trusty computer and an open heart, I set about writing the manuscript for *Unstuck in Provence*, all while exploring the wonders of Provence. It was one of the most delicious highlights of my life.

On our return to live in Melbourne in 2011, I took on a whole series of projects (aka experiments) to gain the clarity I was seeking. I went to work for a women's not-for-profit called *Fitted for Work*, started my education and publishing company *Carolyn Tate & Co.*, published *Unstuck in Provence* and *Conscious Marketing* and founded *The Slow School of Business*, our *Talk on Purpose* course and now *The Purpose Project*.

And I haven't even begun to list the projects that are no longer in existence (note how I carefully avoided the word 'failed'). Each project, whether alive and kicking today, or not, has helped me fine-tune my future work direction and has been an incredible learning experience. I've come to understand inherently, that we learn best by doing and testing.

As Oscar Wilde said, "the riskiest thing in life is taking no risks at all".

It's now seven years since I found the courage to move to France, start over and step onto the path to purpose. For me, it was a risk worth taking because it ultimately led me to writing this book for you.

I hope *The Purpose Project* becomes a book that truly matters to you and that it helps guide you towards a more meaningful work life.



WHY WE NEED THIS BOOK

“ You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete. ”
- Buckminster Fuller

On the 21st January 2017, nearly five million people marched in 500 cities, in 80 countries across the world at the *Women's March*. From Washington to the Antarctic to Melbourne – women, men and children gathered and made a stand for human rights, women's rights, LGBTQI rights and the rights of Mother Earth.

The inauguration of the 45th President of the USA held the mirror up to humanity, turning millions and millions of people from apathy to activism in one giant global gathering. It was the wake-up call the world desperately needed. This event started the mass movement away from our dominant world-state of separation and destruction towards co-operation and reparation and towards the pursuit of something far greater than power and profit.

It was the catalyst for the dawning of a new age – *The Human Age* – the age where finding meaning and making a difference, matters most.

So, now we find ourselves facing two choices. We can choose to ignore the new age on our doorstep and return to our apathy or we can choose the more courageous path and turn to greater activism, not in a placard-carrying, street-marching kind of way, but in daily activism in the way we live and work.

We simply can't leave it to the appointed leaders of our institutions and our governments to build the new systems required to make change happen.

It's not their responsibility alone to lead this 21st century reformation. It's up to each of us to take radical responsibility for this change, starting in our own backyard – because the state of the world starts with us.

It starts by digging deep into our own inner world so we can create change in our outer world. And we don't all have to run away from our current work and life either. We can explore the full possibility and potential to bring more meaning to our work, starting right where we are.

Khalil Gibran, the American artist, poet and writer said, “when you are born, your work is placed in your heart”. I do believe this is true. We were born with a calling to do great work and make a difference, but after years of industrialisation and indoctrination, it's been repressed and we've been diverted away from realising our true gifts. We haven't unearthed what we're here to create, so we end up doing work that depletes us instead of completes us.

This is supported by the findings of a 2012 global Gallup poll that shows a mere 13% of employees are actively engaged at work, while 87% are either not engaged or actively disengaged. It would seem that 87% of the world's workers are making a 'dying' instead of a 'living' at work. How do we bring life back to work? How do we turn this tragic statistic around?

I believe the answer lies in radically reorienting people and the organisations they work for towards a higher purpose than profit.

And we do this by digging deep into our passions, talents and strengths and by exploring those gifts we have to offer and those things we want to fix in the world. We do this at both a personal and organisational level. We do it by addressing both our personal and collective pain, because pain always leads to finding purpose.

Deep down we all want to find our *why* in the workplace. We all want to do work that lights us up, that makes a difference and that creates prosperity as a result. That's why we

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need *The Purpose Project*, a handbook and course that's designed for the humanists in the world.

Imagine for a moment, a world where everyone wakes up inspired to be going to work, just knowing the work we're doing is in service to our soul and in service to the souls of others. Just imagine!

Of one thing, you can be certain. The world needs you. Humanity needs you. Mother Earth needs you. We need millions and millions of passionate, purpose-driven people like you to keep the light shining bright and to make shift happen.



WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

“ *When the student is ready, the teacher will appear. When the student is truly ready... the teacher will disappear.* ”

- Lao Tzu

If you believe in the status quo of our current world and that we simply have to accept things as they are, then this book is not for you. If you believe that it's not your responsibility to make change happen and you don't have any power to make change happen, then this book is not for you.

This book is for you, if you believe it's possible to do work that is meaningful to you, that makes a positive contribution to the world. This book is for you if you are ready, willing and able to shake things up, to get out of the conditioned patterns of the past and to take action.

This book is for the appointed leaders of big companies dedicated to bringing a higher purpose to their companies and everyone who works with them. It's for the self-leaders, irrespective of job title, who are brave enough to champion a higher purpose in the workplace. It's for entrepreneurs riding the highs and lows of the start-up world and business owners who have already had success but just know there's something far greater they'd like to contribute to the world.

It's for school students and university students willing to go outside the confines of conventional education and traditional employment paths in search of their calling. It's for school counsellors and parents charged with the responsibility of guiding the careers of our youth. It's for couples and families who wish to support each other to be their best.

It's for anyone in transition towards a new work life: students finishing high-school, mothers and fathers becoming empty-nesters, people approaching retirement, being made redundant or undergoing a career change.

A NOTE FOR BUSINESS LEADERS & EMPLOYEES

There's a growing body of evidence and research proving that the balance between purpose and profit is now both imperative and urgent.

In a recent survey titled *The Business Case for Purpose*, a team from Harvard Business Review and Ernst & Young's Beacon Institute declared "a new leading edge: those companies able to harness the power of purpose to drive performance and profitability will enjoy a distinct competitive advantage".

Billions of dollars each year are being spent on change and culture programs in companies, while it's claimed that over 70% of them are deemed to be failures. Programs centred on the fundamental underlying *why* of what you do are the ones that elicit intrinsic motivation from your people and that have most chance of succeeding.

There's also a proliferation of wannabe and recent 'corporate escapees' in the world. They're experienced people with great skills and talents who are committed to personal growth and reaching their full potential. They're feeling increasingly 'out of alignment' with the organisation's culture and desperately want to bring more meaning to their workplace. These are the people at most risk of leaving, and the very ones that companies most need to keep. And then there's the Millennials. They too, wish to only work for purpose-driven companies.

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The key to purpose success in organisations lies in finding these people, the self-leaders – the *Purpose Activists*, and through empowering them to bring purpose to life through *Purpose Projects*. This handbook offers the tools, models and practices

required for this. That's why I recommend giving a copy of this book to all your people and deeply engaging them in the course.

A NOTE FOR ENTREPRENEURS, START-UPS & SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

Starting and growing a flourishing business is the toughest gig in town. The long hours and the slim chances of real success, require incredible faith, resilience and persistence. Without a *why* beyond making money, you may not have the fortitude required to 'keep on keeping on' when the going gets tough.

Your purpose, clearly articulated and communicated well, is the very thing that will attract the best partners, suppliers, investors, customers and employees to help you grow your business in the right direction. It will become the thing to guide you through the tough decisions and the driver of your business strategy. It will become the centre of your branding, marketing, sales, recruitment strategies and so much more.

If you've created a business that needs a greater dose of purpose to balance the drive for profit, this book is for you and your team too. Use the tools and practices to deeply explore your purpose. Invite all the people essential to the success of your business to get involved, including your life partner and family members. Not only will your business benefit from doing this work, but everyone will benefit personally too.

A NOTE FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS AND PARENTS

Our education system is currently facing incredible challenges and opportunities. It needs to change in order to equip youth with the skills required to live a globally connected, increasingly automated and nomadic work life, while still giving them a sense of stability and belonging in our uncertain world.

As adults, we must guide our youth to unearth their passions not only through their formal education but through self-directed learning outside of school and through a learn-by-doing approach. Through experimentation

and project-based activities that tap into their creativity and curiosity, students will start to discover their potential vocation/s.

It's my aim for *The Purpose Project* to become required reading for secondary school students and the basis of a course for students navigating their way through choosing subjects, university courses and jobs.

A NOTE FOR COUPLES AND FAMILIES

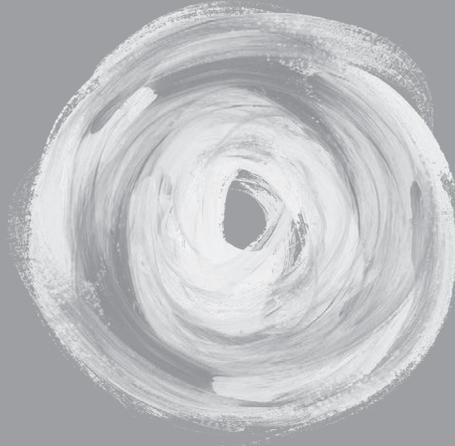
The Purpose Project is also a practical guide to creating harmonious and happy partnerships, families and households.

A successful and enduring partnership is actually a spiritual practice, one where two fully aware human beings, both healthy and functional in their own right, come together to create something greater. A relationship built on consciousness, mutual understanding and a shared vision, also offers autonomy for each individual to pursue their own passions.

Sadly, many relationships become so familiar over time that each partner ends up estranged from the other. There is little deep intimacy or vulnerability which results in two people not really, truly knowing each other and, therefore, being unable to 'show up' in support of the other's dreams.

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My greatest wish is for partners and families to delve into this handbook together as a conduit to strengthening family bonds through the adoption of both collective and personal pet projects.



PART 1

GETTING STARTED ON PURPOSE



WHAT IS PURPOSE?

“*The two most important days of your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.*”
- Mark Twain

The importance of living and working ‘on purpose’ has been the subject of many a philosopher, artist, writer and spiritual leader.

Joseph Campbell said, “follow your bliss”. Pablo Picasso said, “the meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away”.

And now even business leaders are weighing in on the subject. Richard Branson once claimed, “explore this next great frontier where the boundaries between work and higher purpose are merging into one, where doing good, really is good for business”.

But what is this thing called ‘purpose’? What does it actually mean in terms of your work and the organisation you own, lead or work for?

No doubt you have a million questions.

At a personal level, you may be pondering on these questions. Where can purpose be found and where do I start looking for it? Can I make a living from it? Do I have just one purpose or are there multiple possibilities? Do I have to leave my current job to find it or can I find it where I am now? How do I know if I have found my purpose?

At an organisational level, you may also be asking many questions. How do we create a company purpose that is meaningful and actionable?

But what is this thing called ‘purpose’? What does it actually mean in terms of your work and the organisation you own, lead or work for?

How do we balance the imperative of profit with a higher purpose? How do I connect our people to the collective purpose? How will a higher purpose improve productivity and employee happiness?

These are all valid and meaningful questions that you'll be guided to answer for yourself throughout this book.

DEFINING PURPOSE

Purpose is all about living and working at the intersection of your talents and passion in service to yourself and the greater good. It's about living a life and doing work that serves you, humanity and the planet. It's about feeling content in the knowing that what you're doing makes you feel more human, more alive and more valuable.

It answers the fundamental questions: what really matters to me beyond money and material goods; what do I stand for and believe in; what is the contribution I have to make; how is the world better because I exist; what is the legacy I wish to leave?

In other words, why am I here? What is my *why* – my purpose?

It's vital right now that I ground the concept of purpose into something tangible, actionable and practical lest it be seen as something too lofty and unattainable.

Purpose is a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to the self [organisation] and consequential for the world beyond the self [organisation].

- William Damon, Path to Purpose

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This definition works at both a personal and organisational level. I've inserted the words 'organisation' next to the word 'self'. An 'organisation' is any entity created outside an individual that becomes a collective of two or more people: a small

business, a major corporation, a government body, an industry association, a not-for-profit or charity, a community, a school, a sports team and even a couple or family.

There are three essential elements to this definition. Firstly, that there's an intention to 'accomplish something', a path to take, a goal to achieve or a project to undertake. Secondly, it must be 'meaningful' to us which means we're passionate about it and it enables us to reach our highest potential while making the most of our skills and talents. Thirdly, it's 'consequential for the world' which means that it's in service to others and that it makes a difference.

The first part of this definition around the notion of having to 'accomplish something' is why this book has been named *The Purpose Project*. Your purpose arrives through doing and achieving something, not by just thinking about it, which is where most of us remain stuck.

THE FLUIDITY OF PURPOSE

Through the course of writing this book, I've come to understand that purpose is not a solid, set and forget, single-minded notion for each person. We must take the heat off ourselves to find 'that one thing' that will keep our motor running forever. It's a myth, and I would be doing you grievous harm if you were to believe there was only one guiding north-star for you.

At a personal level, we each have many things that are truly meaningful to us that will result in various projects and accomplishments. While in this book we focus on work purpose, the principles can apply to any area of our life. Also, even in our work, we can each have multiple purposes that will change over time as we learn and grow and our values and beliefs change. For example, my highest personal work purpose and the one that will never die, is: "to write books that truly matter", while the purpose of my company and this book is: "to unearth a higher purpose in people and organisations". This second purpose will most definitely change for me in years to come once I'm certain I've left the legacy for others to carry it on.

Your purpose arrives through doing and achieving something, not by just thinking about it, which is where most of us remain stuck.

Also, as the famous song *Beautiful Boy* by John Lennon goes, “life is what happens to us while we are making other plans”. Sometimes our best laid purpose plans can turn on a pin-head due to good fortune or misfortune and we get called towards a new even higher purpose that we may never have conceived possible. While we must remain steadfastly focused on working towards our purpose, we must also remain unattached and open to the beautiful, wild, universal possibilities.

While a human may have multiple purposes, at an enterprise level, there must only be one clear *why* in order to galvanise effective action – like bees in a hive all working towards the single-minded purpose of making sweet, sweet honey.

DEFINING ‘HIGHER PURPOSE’

You’ll notice throughout this book that I often use the words ‘higher purpose’. There are three reasons for this.

Firstly, a higher purpose is like a higher power, it’s something outside of us that intrinsically drives us. While we must still do the work, we’re also being guided by something bigger than ourselves – call it the universe, spirit, God, nature or whatever else works for you. When you have a clear intention towards fulfilling your purpose (and if you are paying attention), you’ll notice that the very people, opportunities and circumstances that you most need, will present themselves. Synchronicity is at play and magic happens.

Secondly, the higher purpose implies that it’s about being ‘in service’ to something beyond the individual and the organisation itself. It’s ultimately in service to all of your stakeholders not just those who transact with you (employees, customers and suppliers) but the community in which you operate, society, humankind and the environment. We exist in a delicate

Sometimes our best laid purpose plans can turn on a pin-head due to good fortune or misfortune and we get called towards a new even higher purpose that we may never have conceived possible.

eco-system and our choices will have consequences (intended or unintended) that will either negatively or positively impact this eco-system.

Thirdly, higher purpose implies that it's noble, just, moral and ethical – not necessarily legal. There are many activities occurring in this world that happen to be legal, which are unjust. There are also many activities one would deem to be just, that are actually illegal.

Higher purpose is, of course, a highly subjective notion. What I believe to be the truth and to be ethical and moral will most definitely be different to your beliefs. Just be prepared to question the notion of higher purpose as you work through this book. We'll be exploring your truth and what you stand for as the foundation of your purpose-driven work.

ANOTHER WORD FOR PURPOSE

It seems that 'purpose' is the word on everyone's lips right now. There's a plethora of new books, journals, TED talks and articles being released on the topic since Simon Sinek brought it to the mainstream arena in his *Start with Why* book and TED talk. Even Justin Bieber has weighed in on the subject with his 'Purpose' song, album and world tour.

I have a bit of a love/hate relationship with the word as I believe many people and organisations are both misunderstanding and mistreating it. It's seen as a trend and something for the marketing or PR department to play with as more of an advertising line rather than the catalyst for affecting deep change in the workplace.

So, if you would like to opt for a different word, feel free to replace it with any of the following: mission, passion, meaning, calling, cause, reason for being, ikigai (the Japanese term for 'reason for being'), intention, livelihood, your *why*, true north, vocation, highest potential and finally my personal favourite; 'raison d'être' (the French phrase for 'reason for being').

Throughout the book, I'll deliberately switch between these different terms for purpose so that we don't get hung up on the word. In reality, however, it has nothing to do with the words we use. What really matters is your intention and then the action you take. Actions speak far louder than words!



ROBERT'S STORY

“ *The world is but a canvas to our imagination.* ”
- Henry David Thoreau

Robert Davis is a dear friend of mine who I met five years ago in Melbourne. He's a tall, handsome American and a most exquisite fine artist. Robert has lived and worked all over the world from Philadelphia to Shanghai to Melbourne and now in London.

When I first met Robert, he'd just moved to Melbourne and was barely making ends meet. On occasions, he was working for cash as a day-hire labourer knocking down walls on construction sites and living extremely frugally on just \$10 a day.

While he'd enjoyed a good deal of success with his art and made a healthy income in Shanghai teaching and exhibiting his own work, he'd come to Melbourne with little means and he was starting all over again. As Robert says, “It was sobering and humbling and really soul destroying. I wasn't in a very good place for that first couple of years. I had a suitcase full of capabilities and many past successes under my belt but there weren't many doors opening”.

Robert clearly recalls the first day we met. “You asked me, ‘why do you do what you do?’ What is your purpose? What difference are you making with your art? I'd never been asked such direct questions before and it shook me up a bit. It started me thinking about the real value and impact of my work,” says Robert.

After this experience, Robert decided to take bigger and bigger steps into building a business around his art and to seek fair compensation for his services.

“It was a real turning point for me,” says Robert, “I regained my confidence and belief in myself and my work and around the same time I also met my life partner and Melbourne became the place to always come home to (Robert is now an Australian citizen). Things just seemed to fall into place.”

Since then, Robert has shared his story on two TEDx stages, completed numerous well-paid fine-art life-landscapes of people's life stories and taken up a role as the art teacher at the prestigious American School in London until mid 2017.

While teaching art and painting landscapes for clients, he's also never once stopped creating his own art. One of his recent pieces was chosen for the poster of The Art Below Summer Show which was seen by millions of people in the London Underground. This has led to the creation of a bespoke piece of art for the founder of Art Below (he was chosen out of hundreds of artists), his own exhibition in London and the landing of an art rep who will present his work all over the UK.

In terms of his work as an art teacher, he's also made a real impact on his students. He now asks them what they want to do with their art out of school and more importantly 'why' and he shows them how to make art an integral part of their lives. Every student is asked to write, 'I am full of possibilities...' in their art journal on their very first lesson.

And in parent/teacher interviews he even asks parents about their *why*. “I say to them... ‘I know what makes your kid happy, but what makes you happy? Are you doing work that you are truly passionate about?’” says Robert. “I even had one father tear up when I asked that question. He shared that he was extremely unhappy in his career and that his whole life he'd loved drawing and that he'd always wanted to be an architect.”

What I love most about Robert's story is that he has never, ever given up on his purpose and the fact that he's been flexible and adaptable in bringing it to life. He has three projects that each make him a healthy livelihood: employment as an art teacher, his business in bespoke commissioned work and then his public exhibitions and sales.



Watch Robert Davis' talk on The Slow School of Business YouTube channel.



THE PURPOSE PROJECT

“ *It takes half your life before you discover that life is a do-it-yourself project.* ”
- Napoleon Hill

Robert’s story is a great segue into the reason this course is called *The Purpose Project*. Robert treats his life and the way he earns a living as a series of projects. Each piece of art is a project. Each exhibition is a project. Even his time as a teacher at The American School in London has been a project as he ends his contract to start new projects back in Australia. Each project is a stepping stone to another project that fulfils his purpose.

If you’ve never really thought about your *why* before, or taken any action towards exploring it, it can be hard to conceive how you might find it and bring it to life. That’s why we start by adopting bite-sized projects to test our potential path.

We think of our work as a series of projects, each with a start and end date and a way to measure our sense of joy, satisfaction and success. Even within the scope of a long career at one organisation, *Purpose Projects* are a great way to affect change in your daily work and make an impact on those around you.

Projects enable us to test, proto-type and experiment with our purpose. A project might simply involve self-directed learning and researching a field you’re passionate about and then completing an assignment to assess if you’ve found that thing that lights you up.

For example, if your desire has always been to be a veterinarian, before enrolling in a four-year course, it simply makes sense to take on your

own project to test its viability. This could involve creating a vision for what that career might look like and a deep dive into *why* you want to be a vet. It might involve working at your local vet voluntarily or with the RSCPA while learning all you can about the profession through online resources and documentaries. It could involve spending time with vets and interviewing them about the reality of the life of a vet. There's nothing like learning through an experiential project before committing to the rigorous education required for some professions.

THE WHAT & THE WHY

When you undertake any project, you first need to understand *what* it is you want to achieve and more importantly, *why* you want to achieve it. When you are convicted of your *why*, the *what* always transpires, most often not *how* you'd envision it or at the exact time you might have hoped for, but usually it eventuates.

This book is a great example of that and it's a testament to the fact that I'm 'on purpose'. The moment I conceived the idea in late 2015, I knew that it would come to fruition, that I had the experience and know-how to write it and that, most importantly, it met my purpose to write books that truly matter.

My Purpose Project became to write *The Purpose Project* (although it had a different title at the time). In January 2016, I set about writing the first 5,000 or so words. As I was writing, I gained more clarity on who it was for and the content. I wasn't even thinking about how I would publish it or market it.

Then in late July 2016, after a number of life and work distractions, I realised that I'd not really progressed the book as much as I'd hoped. So, I organised a week-long lock-up in a cottage in the bush with the goal to finish 20,000 words and a marketing proposal to send to three potential publishers.

Even at the time of sending out the proposals on the final eve of that lock-up, I was unattached to how the book would eventually be published or who would publish it. It was just one more stepping stone to fulfilling my vision.

Not long after sending out the proposals, I received an email from one of the publishers rejecting my proposal. “Purpose is peaking and there are a number of books being launched in 2017 on purpose, so you’ve missed the boat,” I was told.

This rejection was all the impetus I needed to finish this book and self-publish it. I wasn’t deterred one little bit. In fact, I was even more motivated by this rejection which I saw as just another sign that I’m doing work that really matters.

The point of this story is that when we know *what* we want to achieve and *why*, we can be less dogmatic about the *how*.

Incidentally, when I ask the question to a room full of people, “how many of you would like to write and publish a book?”, I guarantee at least a 50% show of hands. When I ask, “how many have written a book?” about 5% will respond with a “yes”. When I ask, “who has actually published it (self-published or commercially)?” the numbers go down to about 1%.

So often, what we say we really want, is not actually what we want. If we wanted it that badly, we’d already have done it or at least be doing it.

When we know our *why*, we simply have work to do, even when there is absolutely no guarantee of success.

Purpose Projects don’t only work at an individual level. They work well for teams and across organisations and stakeholder groups too. Collective projects based on activating a higher purpose are the way to transform cultures and bring life back to the workplace.

The ultimate goal of this book is to help you pick a *Purpose Project* or projects to accomplish something that is both meaningful to you and that serves your corner of the world. The aim is to help you gain clarity of purpose through the completion of a project by giving you the tools and structures you need.

When we know our *why*, we simply have work to do, even when there is absolutely no guarantee of success.



FINDING YOUR WORK PURPOSE

“ *Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.* ”
- JF Kennedy

You may feel that finding your purpose-driven livelihood is a utopian dream. Perhaps you feel that nothing you've done to date could possibly lead you to your purpose or that you just don't have what it takes to do the work you'd really love to be doing.

Our work purpose is not found in a new job, a new company or a new country. It's actually much closer than we think and it's right there already, we just haven't been paying attention and tending to it.

The story of the Golden Buddha puts this idea into perspective.

UNEARTHING YOUR GOLDEN BUDDHA

In 1957, an entire Monastery in Thailand was being relocated by a group of monks. One day as they were shifting a giant clay Buddha from its foundations, one of the monks noticed a large crack in the clay. On closer inspection, he observed a golden light emanating from the crack. The monk used a hammer and a chisel to chip away at the layers of clay until he revealed that the entire statue was made of solid gold.

Historians believe the Buddha had been covered with clay by Thai monks several hundred years earlier to protect it from being stolen in an attack by

Our work purpose is not found in a new job, a new company or a new country. It's actually much closer than we think and it's right there already, we just haven't been paying attention and tending to it.

Through an awareness of, and deep acceptance of our past, we start to shape something meaningful for our future. We start to unearth and reclaim our own Golden Buddha.

Burmese warlords. In the attack, all the monks had been killed and it wasn't until 1957 that this great treasure was discovered.

This true story is a metaphor for our life.

I believe we are each born a Golden Buddha, but during the course of our life we get covered in layer upon layer of clay. The clay is a metaphor for our unconscious conditioning to conform and our life circumstances. The first layer of clay appears the moment we're born with gender conditioning. Then further layers of clay are added by parents, culture, religion, society, the media, schools and workplaces.

But the heaviest layer of clay is of our own doing. It's our acceptance of this unconscious conditioning which results in our limited thinking and unfulfilled potential. We become so laden with clay that we forget our Golden Buddha is there all the time.

Then one day a crack appears in the clay due to painful life circumstances such as ill health, the death of a loved one, job loss or divorce. In this moment, we wake up, we become conscious. We become deeply aware of the crack and we get a wee glimpse of our own unique golden light.

From here we start to chip away at the clay by asking ourselves the most profound questions that we've avoided for far too long. We start to rediscover those things we were passionate about as we grew up. We reconnect with why we first went into our profession or that job we really loved. We recall the times when we were 'in flow' and time stood still. We explore more deeply those latent creative talents we were born with. We reflect on those times that were both joyful and painful. We start to feel, and then truly believe, that something new and brilliant is lying below waiting to emerge.

Through an awareness of, and deep acceptance of our past, we start to shape something meaningful for our future. We start to unearth and reclaim our own Golden Buddha.



DISCOVER YOUR IKIGAI

“ *The only way to do great work is to love what you do.* ”
- Steve Jobs

As mentioned, the Japanese term for purpose is ‘ikigai’. It means ‘reason for being’. They believe that everyone has an ikigai and that finding it requires a deep and lengthy search of self to find it. The term is composed of two Japanese words, *iki* referring to life, and *gai* which means ‘the realisation of what one expects and hopes for’.

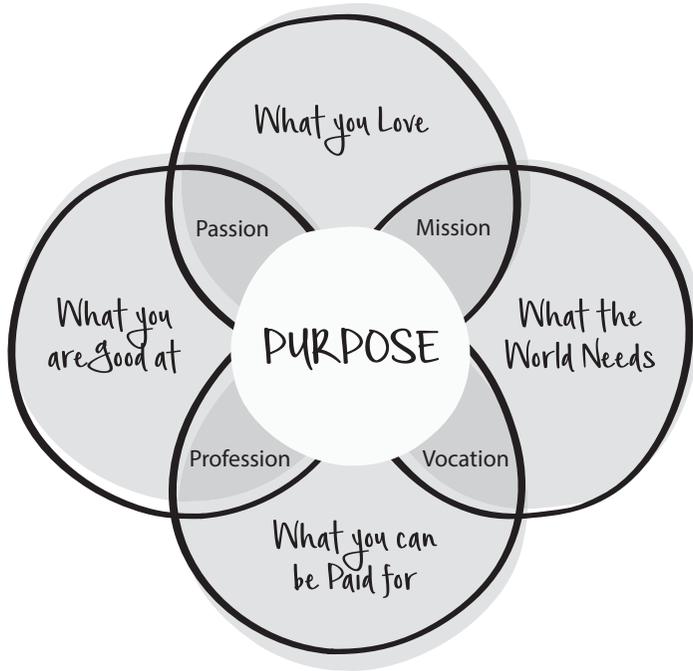
They believe that exploring your ikigai is integral to leading a fulfilling and wholehearted life. Ikigai gives people a reason to enjoy life and a reason to get up in the morning. This reason is not linked to external circumstances. Even if the present is dark and tragic, as long as you have a reason for being, you will survive. There’s a very strong correlation between the work of Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning* and ikigai.

So how do we discover our ikigai? We start with the ikigai purpose model on the following page.

Purpose is found at the intersection of **what you are good at** (strengths, skills, talents), **what you love** (passions, loves, where you lose track of all time), **what the world needs** (making a difference, serving others, healing humanity, regenerating the planet/environment) and **what you can be paid for** (a job or task performed for money).

This model becomes the basis for unearthing your personal work purpose. Through deep enquiry and exploration of each of these circles working with mindful, well-considered questions, you can start to uncover what’s most important to you and those things that might lead to your calling. The ikigai model forms the central theme of the work in this book and the journaling questions coming up.

Discover Your Purpose



The Japanese Ikigai model for finding purpose.

WHAT YOU CAN BE PAID FOR

If you're working solely in this circle, you're likely to be just turning up for the money to pay the bills. You're unlikely to be using your skills and talents doing what you love or what the world needs. It's okay to be working just in this circle. There's no judgment here. We've all done this and many do it so we can pursue our unpaid passions outside of our paid work.

Many 'purpose-driven' people find themselves working in all the other circles but this one. While they're truly lucky to have found their guiding north-star, the goal for these people is to work intensively on this circle to develop ingenious and creative ways to make a healthy income from their work.

WHAT YOU ARE GOOD AT

This is where your strengths, skills and talents are being fully utilised and you're being sought out for them. You're experienced, knowledgeable, qualified and well-regarded and you've probably spent years cultivating these talents. You most likely get sought out for the things you're good at: selling, marketing, writing, teaching, website building, carpentry, plumbing, graphic design, bookkeeping, financial planning, nursing and so on.

At the intersection of 'what you are good at' and 'what you can be paid for', you have a 'profession'. A profession is a paid occupation that makes use of your skills and qualifications. People only operating in these two circles can be quite rational, functional and career-driven. Over time, burn-out can occur and you start to question it all, mainly because you've been unable to incorporate the other two circles of purpose into your work.

WHAT YOU LOVE

In this circle, you're moving beyond the rational and functional, where the first two circles keep you. You're moving into serious heart territory. It's where you start to lose track of time and are inspired by your work. You're in flow because the work you're doing fuels your fire. It's where you feel like you're accomplishing something that's really meaningful to you.

'What you are good at' and 'what you love' are not the same thing. For example, if you're a talented engineer you can use your skills to design yet another high-rise office block that you've done many times before, or you can use your skills to design a revolutionary new water theme park that tests your talents and that gives you real joy.

At the intersection of 'what you are good at' and 'what you love', you find your 'passion'.

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

When you add this circle to the other three circles, then absolutely anything is possible. This is when your work is also of service to others. It's no longer about 'me'. It's about 'we'. You're using your skills and talents to

accomplish something that is meaningful to you and that is consequential for the world.

For example, imagine if the engineer were to use his skills to design a water theme park that could not only bring joy to families that could afford it, but to families living in poverty? Or imagine if the theme park had a water and environmental education aspect to it or a program to bring water wells to developing countries facing water crises?

At the intersection of ‘what you love’ and ‘what the world needs’, you’ve found your ‘mission’. A mission is an assignment you simply have to achieve that is not necessarily financially rewarded. Many charity volunteers are actually on a mission.

At the intersection of ‘what the world needs’ and ‘what you can be paid for’, you’ve found your ‘vocation’. A vocation is a worthy occupation that pays you while you solve world problems but does not necessarily make the most of ‘what you are good at’ or ‘what you love’.

WHAT CIRCLES ARE YOU WORKING IN?

When it comes to our work, most of us only play in one or two of these circles at a time and mostly in the circles of ‘what you can be paid for’ and ‘what you are good at’. Many people have never considered how they might incorporate the ‘what you love’ and ‘what the world needs’ circles into their work.

You may feel it’s impossible to fulfil all four circles in one job. That’s not the immediate aim. The goal is to gently explore all these circles and bring them to the fore so they can all dance together over time. The aim is to be curious not serious, to have fun and test things out. Over time, we aim to fulfil our potential and purpose by activating all four circles.

Before I gave everything up and moved to France in 2010, I was in a profession, doing what I was good at and could be paid for. I’d never deeply considered what I

You may feel it’s impossible to fulfil all four circles in one job. That’s not the immediate aim. The goal is to gently explore all these circles and bring them to the fore so they can all dance together over time.

truly loved or what the world needed or how these might be integrated into my work.

The time in France was the career-circuit breaker I needed to explore and experiment with these other two circles and it was the foundation for changing the trajectory of my life's work. However, as I've already stated, you don't need to run away from home like I did, to find your *why*. You can start right where you are, with all that you have in your current work.

Keep reading for a list of questions to journal on that will help you explore each of these circles in depth.



LAURA'S STORY

Recently I had a coffee with a 45-year-old corporate employee, Laura. She looked tired and sad and there was a general air of helplessness and hopelessness about her. We discussed her work and it was immediately clear that she was most definitely working in the circles of 'what she is good at' and 'what she can be paid for'.

She was talented, educated, highly qualified and a very productive team player. If there was something that needed to be done, she was the one that got the job. "I often work at least 50 hours a week," she told me, "the company pays me really well but my boss really doesn't value me. We're all so focused on bringing in the next contract that no one really thinks about the impact we're having as a company. Making money is our only priority," she shared.

We discussed her personal life and how she spent her time out of work which was mostly spent caring for her elderly parents, being a supportive wife and a devoted mother (and taxi-service) to her teenage kids. She also mentioned numerous friends dealing with problems that she'd made herself available to.

Laura had been doing everything for everyone else for many years and had devoted literally no time to exploring the things that would bring her real joy.

This is a classic case of the 'what you love' and 'what the world needs' circles being totally usurped by the others. Laura has been over-serving others and under-serving herself, which is my definition of martyrdom. While one might argue that she's doing what the world needs in being of service to those who rely on her, I believe the opposite is true. It's not possible to truly serve others unless you serve yourself first.

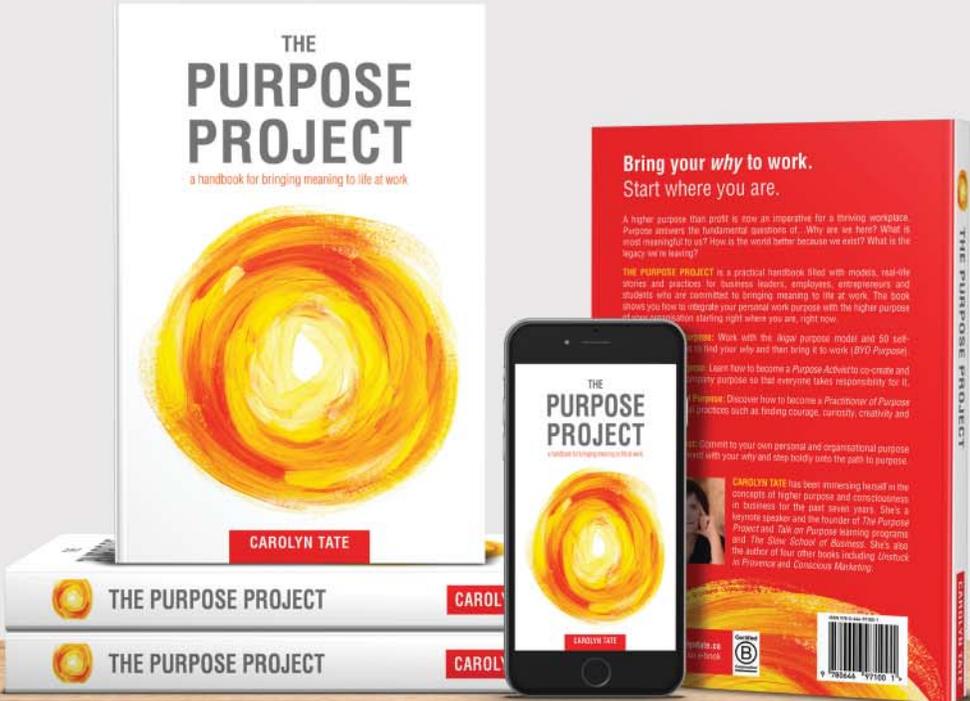
Now Laura finds herself extremely unhappy at work, resentful of her boss and family but mostly angry at herself. “I went to a therapist the other week and she told me that I must find the courage to establish boundaries on what I will and won’t do for others and to spend time on nurturing my own passions. If I don’t do this, I’ll burn out and then I won’t be helpful to anyone, including myself,” she said.

For many of us, this story may sound familiar. When I ask people what they truly love and what they’re passionate about, the answer is almost never work and often limited to family or perhaps a hobby and usually something quite safe that’s never really pushed them into new realms of possibility. Today, many people are so exhausted from working in jobs they hate in our workaholic world that they have very little time for family and the other necessities of life, let alone the time to explore true joy and colour wildly outside the edges of their day-to-day existence.

I truly hope that Laura found the courage to say ‘no’ to what was limiting her potential and ‘yes’ to her courage, curiosity and creativity. The most heart-warming aspect of my work is being the midwife of possibility in people like Laura. People who are ready, willing and able to get started on the purpose work constantly remind me of *why* I do what I do.

Is there a little (or big) piece of Laura’s story in your story?

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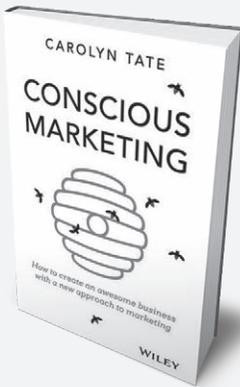
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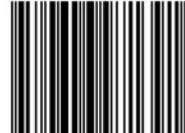


CAROLYN TATE has been immersing herself in the concepts of higher purpose and consciousness in business for the past seven years. She's a keynote speaker and the founder of *The Purpose Project* and *Talk on Purpose* learning programs and *The Slow School of Business*. She's also the author of four other books including *Unstuck in Provence* and *Conscious Marketing*.

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