

# How Will You Measure Your Life?

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The Web site for this book is at [www.measureyourlife.com](http://www.measureyourlife.com).

ISBN 978-1-77544-734-4

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**MAIN IDEA**

To truly figure out whether or not your life has been a success, there are three questions you have to answer.

Despite all the people who are ready and willing to sell you quick fixes and ready-made answers, the reality is you'll spend your entire career figuring out your own answers to these important and hard questions.

What matters most are not the conclusions you draw – which will likely change from time to time anyway – but the tools you use to reach those conclusions. Make sure you're using the most robust tools that are available so you end up leading the type of life to which you truly aspire. That's the real key to making the journey worthwhile.



- 1 You're successful in your career?
- 2 You find happiness in the personal relationships you build?
- 3 You live with integrity – and manage to stay out of jail?

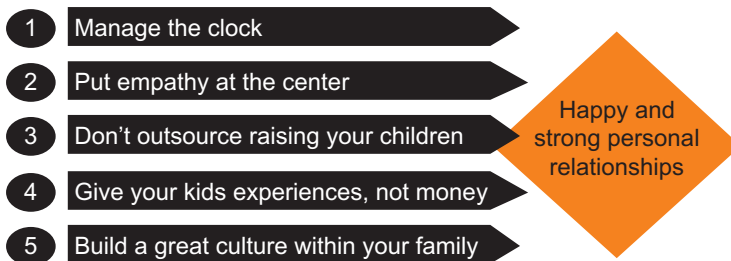
**1. Finding happiness in your career** . . . . . Pages 2 - 4

One of the greatest feelings in the world is to wake up every day thinking how lucky you are to be doing what you're doing for a living. That doesn't happen by accident – to achieve it and then sustain it, you need a three-part strategy:



**2. Finding happiness in your relationships** . . . . . Pages 5 - 7

As alluring as your work may be, there is more to life than just your career. You also want to become a great person and probably to raise great kids and have great friends as well. To stay aligned with what really matters, utilize a five-part strategy for building and maintaining strong and vibrant personal relationships:



**3. Living with integrity** . . . . . Page 8

Despite the fact more high-profile businesspeople than ever are in prison, the fact is living a life of integrity isn't hard – it's actually very simple. All you need here is one theory:



1. Finding happiness in your career

One of the greatest feelings in the world is to wake up every day thinking how lucky you are to be doing what you're doing for a living. That doesn't happen by accident – to achieve it and then sustain it, you need a three-part strategy:



1 The right priorities

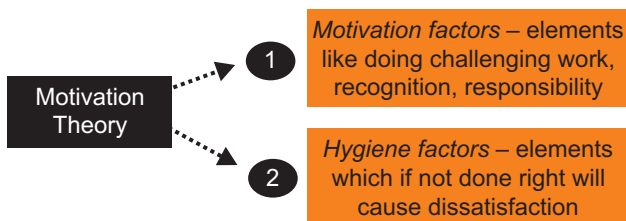
*"It's impossible to have a meaningful conversation about happiness without understanding what makes each of us tick. When we find ourselves stuck in unhappy careers—and even unhappy lives—it is often the result of a fundamental misunderstanding of what really motivates us."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

In the business world, much thought has been given to what motivates people to perform. From the mid-1970s onwards, incentives came to the fore – to get people to do good work, you pay them more money and align all the incentives in the direction of superior performance. That's great but there are some anomalies this theory cannot explain:

- Some of the hardest working people on the planet are employed by nonprofits and charities.
- The military attracts some remarkable people who work for a fraction of what they could earn in the private sector.

With that in mind, a second school of thought emerged which came to be termed the "Motivation Theory." This second theory suggests incentives are not the same as motivation. Motivation can be defined as "getting people to do something because they want to do it." Motivation theory distinguishes between two types of factors:



It turns out money or compensation is more of a hygiene factor than a motivation factor. If you're being underpaid, you will notice it but once you're making a reasonable amount of money, the opportunity to make 10% more doesn't really get your engine running. The real motivators turn out to be things like feeling that you make a meaningful contribution to what's being achieved and that you have challenging work which will foster your own personal growth. Those are the real factors that cause you to love what you're doing and to generate your best work.

What this has to do with building a successful career is it's very easy to choose "the amount of money you make" as the sole measure of success for your career. This is especially true for traders or salespeople where money is a metric of success and is directly linked to sales volumes. Certainly when you're under pressure to recoup the investment you've made in a quality education, the amount of money you make is an important factor but this is never the whole story – especially if you get trapped doing a job you hate but which you feel you cannot "afford" to give up.

*"The point isn't that money is the root cause of professional unhappiness. It's not. The problems start occurring when it becomes the priority over all else, when hygiene factors are satisfied but the quest remains only to make more money."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

While money is a reasonable measure of professional success, it's not the only metric and it's not even the most important one for most people. Doing something that makes a difference in the world or tackling some vexing problem that affects lots of people can be pretty powerful motivators as well. So too are the opportunities to learn new things and to bring together a team of exceptional people who pull off something everyone assumed was impossible.

The cliché states: "Find a job that you love and you'll never work a day in your life." The reality is if you find a job that you truly love, which pays enough for you to put your family on a secure financial footing and which you find meaningful in a way which resonates with your own values, then you'll have a distinct advantage over others who are just showing up to pay the bills. You'll throw your best efforts into your job, which will make you very good at what you do which, in turn, often means you'll get paid well. Get your priorities right and everything else follows.

*"For many of us, one of the easiest mistakes to make is to focus on trying to over-satisfy the tangible trappings of professional success in the mistaken belief that those things will make us happy. Better salaries. A more prestigious title. A nicer office. They are, after all, what our friends and family see as signs that we have "made it" professionally. But as soon as you find yourself focusing on the tangible aspects of your job, you are at risk of becoming like some of my classmates, chasing a mirage. The next pay raise, you think, will be the one that finally makes you happy. It's a hopeless quest. The theory of motivation suggests you need to ask yourself a different set of questions than most of us are used to asking. Is this work meaningful to me? Is this job going to give me a chance to develop? Am I going to learn new things? Will I have an opportunity for recognition and achievement? Am I going to be given responsibility? These are the things that will truly motivate you. Once you get this right, the more measurable aspects of your job will fade in importance."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

*"In my assessment, it is frightfully easy for us to lose our sense of the difference between what brings money and what causes happiness. You must be careful not to confuse correlation with causality in assessing the happiness we can find in different jobs. We should always remember that beyond a certain point, hygiene factors such as money, status, compensation, and job security are much more a by-product of being happy with a job rather than the cause of it. Realizing this frees us to focus on the things that really matter."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

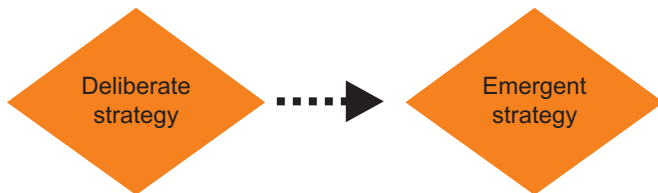
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Balance between plans & opportunities

*“Understanding what makes us tick is a critical step on the path to fulfillment. But that’s only half the battle. You actually have to find a career that both motivates you and satisfies the hygiene factors. If it were that easy, however, wouldn’t each of us already have done that? Rarely is it so simple. You have to balance the pursuit of aspirations and goals with taking advantage of unanticipated opportunities. Managing this part of the strategy process is often the difference between success and failure for companies; it’s true for our careers, too.”*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

In the business world, strategy typically evolves over time. Companies start out with a planned strategy but then modify it as unanticipated opportunities open up and as problems come along which once solved take things in a new direction altogether. A good example of this was Honda when it tried to break into the U.S. motorcycle market in the 1960s. Honda’s initial strategy to compete head-to-head with Harley-Davidson and Triumph by selling big bikes was unsuccessful. It wasn’t until some recreational dirt bikers saw Honda employees playing around on one of their Super-Cubs and they asked where to buy them that Honda realized there was an opportunity to target a different market niche. Honda changed its strategy and succeeded by selling Super-Cubs through the Sears mail order catalog and in power equipment and sporting-goods stores rather than motorbike dealers.



Honda started with a “deliberate strategy” to compete in the big-bike market but ended up finding success with an “emergent strategy” to sell small-bikes instead. Strategy keeps evolving in an ongoing process which is unruly and patchy. Often the emergent strategy ends up becoming the deliberate strategy. This is the process which almost all successful companies use.

The same principle also applies in your career as well. Many students emerge from their educational experience with their careers planned out in fine detail. If this is you, then your career plan is your own life’s deliberate strategy. The reality is, however, unanticipated opportunities will arise and the hard choice is sometimes whether to stick to your original plan or take advantage of those new opportunities. You have to make a judgment call whether to stay with your deliberate strategy or hitch your wagon to an emergent strategy instead.

*“In our lives and in our careers, whether we are aware of it or not, we are constantly navigating a path by deciding between our deliberate strategies and the unanticipated alternatives that emerge. Each approach is vying for our minds and our hearts, making its best case to become our actual strategy. Neither is inherently better or worse; rather, which you should choose depends on where you are on the journey. Understanding this—that strategy is made up of these two disparate elements, and that your circumstances dictate which approach is best—will*

*better enable you to sort through the choices that your career will constantly present.”*

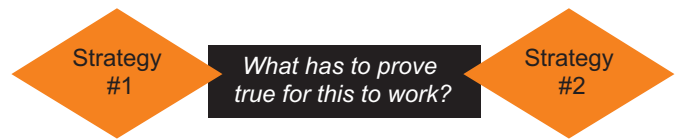
– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

As a general rule-of-thumb, a deliberate strategy for your career makes sense only if you have already found a job which provides you with motivation and hygiene factors. In that circumstance, your focus should be on maximizing what you’re already doing. If you have not yet reached that point, then you need to be more emergent and more prepared to experiment a little and see what really works.

*“As you go through your career, you will begin to find the areas of work you love and in which you will shine; you will, hopefully, find a field where you can maximize the motivators and satisfy the hygiene factors. But it’s rarely a case of sitting in an ivory tower and thinking through the problem until the answer pops into your head. Strategy almost always emerges from a combination of deliberate and unanticipated opportunities. What’s important is to get out there and try stuff until you learn where your talents, interests, and priorities begin to pay off. When you find out what really works for you, then it’s time to flip from an emergent strategy to a deliberate one.”*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

It’s easy to say be open to opportunities as they emerge but life is usually pretty messy. Ten interesting opportunities may arise at once and you can’t choose. Or it will be hard to figure out whether you should invest resources in going down one path but not another. When making these kinds of trade-off decisions, a good tool to use is to ask: “What has to prove true for this to work?”



Before you make a decision, pause and clarify what assumptions are involved for each potential strategy you’re thinking about. What pre-conditions must be met in order for that strategy to work as you hope? If you can articulate those critical underlying assumptions, or even better find a way to test those assumptions cheaply and quickly, then you’ll avoid getting into a situation where you’ve set yourself up to fail right from the start.

*“What we can learn from how companies develop strategy is that although it is hard to get it right at first, success doesn’t rely on this. Instead, it hinges on continuing to experiment until you do find an approach that works. Only a lucky few companies start off with the strategy that ultimately leads to success. Once you understand the concept of emergent and deliberate strategy, you’ll know that if you’ve yet to find something that really works in your career, expecting to have a clear vision of where your life will take you is just wasting time. Even worse, it may actually close your mind to unexpected opportunities. While you are still figuring out your career, you should keep the aperture of your life wide open. Depending on your particular circumstances, you should be prepared to experiment with different opportunities, ready to pivot, and continue to adjust your strategy until you find what it is that both satisfies the hygiene factors and gives you all the motivators. Only then does a deliberate strategy make sense. When you get it right, you’ll know.”*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

3

Allocate your resources to execution 

*“To understand a company’s strategy, look at what they actually do rather than what they say they will do.”*

– Andy Grove, former CEO, Intel

The third and final component in finding success in your career is resource allocation. Quite literally how you allocate your resources is where the rubber meets the road when it comes to strategy. The ways you allocate your personal resources determines which deliberate and which emergent initiatives you value the most. Or put another way, strategies are nothing but good intentions until you commit resources to them.

*“Real strategy—in companies and in our lives—is created through hundreds of everyday decisions about where we spend our resources. As you’re living your life from day to day, how do you make sure you’re heading in the right direction? Watch where your resources flow. If they’re not supporting the strategy you’ve decided upon, then you’re not implementing that strategy at all.”*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

The challenges which can arise in allocating resources to executing your personal strategy are numerous and diverse and will often include:

- *Prioritizing the short term over the long* – investing in endeavors which offer immediate gratification rather than those which will result in enduring success. Many multinational companies rotate their managers through a variety of assignments to give them broad experience. That’s great but for these managers-in-the-making, the quality of their next assignment depends on the results they generate in the year or two they are involved in their current assignment. These managers don’t invest in projects with five- or ten-year payoffs because they won’t be able to gain the accolades. As a result, these large companies struggle to generate genuine breakthroughs because the returns are too far in the distance for the managers.
- *Misaligned incentives* – paying people for one result when you in fact want them to achieve something entirely different. Take the example of America’s Social Security, Medicare and other entitlement programs. Everyone agrees these programs are unsustainable in their current format but Members of the House of Representatives stand for reelection every two years. Nobody is willing to risk their reelection chances by enacting those solutions which are clearly needed but will cause some short-term consternation.
- *Various projects all competing for the same resources.*

This last challenge is particularly applicable to your personal life. You, like everyone on the planet, have a fixed amount of time, energy, talent and wealth to invest in:

- Building your professional career
- Raising your children to become responsible adults
- Building a relationship with your spouse or significant other
- Contributing to the church of your choice
- Contributing to community or charity groups and causes

Deciding how you will balance all of these competing demands for your resources is the work of a lifetime. This will be an ongoing process that will change and evolve over the years but unless you’re making deliberate choices about where you invest

your resources, your default settings will automatically kick in. You have to keep working on the question of how to allocate your resources all the time.

*“People ask for your time and energy every day, and even if you are focused on what’s important to you, it’s still difficult to know which are the right choices. If you have an extra ounce of energy or a spare thirty minutes, there are a lot of people pushing you to spend them here rather than there. With so many people and projects wanting your time and attention, you can feel like you are not in charge of your own destiny. Sometimes that’s good: opportunities that you never anticipated emerge. But other times, those opportunities can take you far off course, as was true for so many of my classmates. The danger for high-achieving people is that they’ll unconsciously allocate their resources to activities that yield the most immediate, tangible accomplishments. This is often in their careers, as this domain of their life provides the most concrete evidence that they are moving forward. They ship a product, finish a design, help a patient, close a sale, teach a class, win a case, publish a paper, get paid, get promoted. They leave college and find it easy to direct their precious energy into building a career. In fact, how you allocate your own resources can make your life turn out to be exactly as you hope or very different from what you intend.”*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

It’s very easy to prioritize those things which give an immediate return – like getting a promotion or a bonus – at the expense of projects which require long-term work – like building a strong marriage, raising great children and so on. Even worse, when immediate returns are delivered, it’s not unusual for people to get locked into a treadmill where all the money gets soaked up by lifestyle demands. This is a sobering matter which can be seen in the lives of many successful people – they make small decisions which result in misallocated resources.

*“We can tell our values by looking at our checkbook stubs.”*

– Gloria Steinem

*“The only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it.”*

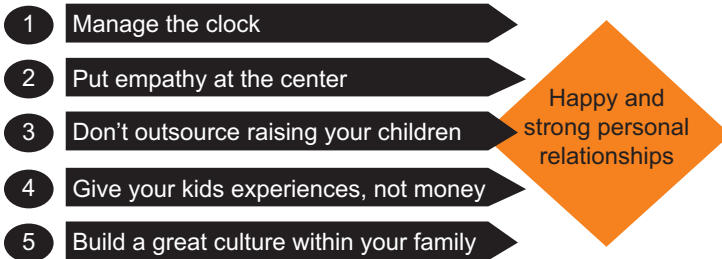
– Steve Jobs

*“A strategy—whether in companies or in life—is created through hundreds of everyday decisions about how you spend your time, energy, and money. With every moment of your time, every decision about how you spend your energy and your money, you are making a statement about what really matters to you. You can talk all you want about having a clear purpose and strategy for your life, but ultimately this means nothing if you are not investing the resources you have in a way that is consistent with your strategy. In the end, a strategy is nothing but good intentions unless it’s effectively implemented. How do you make sure that you’re implementing the strategy you truly want to implement? Watch where your resources flow—the resource allocation process. If it is not supporting the strategy you’ve decided upon, you run the risk of a serious problem. If your family matters most to you, when you think about all the choices you’ve made with your time in a week, does your family seem to come out on top? Because if the decisions you make about where you invest your blood, sweat, and tears are not consistent with the person you aspire to be, you’ll never become that person.”*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

2. Finding happiness in your relationships

As alluring as your work may be, there is more to life than just your career. You also want to become a great person and probably to raise great kids and have great friends as well. To stay aligned with what really matters, utilize a five-part strategy for building and maintaining strong and vibrant personal relationships:



1 Manage the clock

*"The relationships you have with family and close friends are going to be the most important sources of happiness in your life. But you have to be careful. When it seems like everything at home is going well, you will be lulled into believing that you can put your investments in these relationships onto the back burner. That would be an enormous mistake. By the time serious problems arise in those relationships, it often is too late to repair them. This means, almost paradoxically, that the time when it is most important to invest in building strong families and close friendships is when it appears, at the surface, as if it's not necessary."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

Studies have shown 93 percent of all companies that ultimately become successful have only done so after abandoning their original strategy in favor of something that works. When the winning strategy is not yet established, investors need to be patient for growth but impatient for profit so the company doesn't burn through all its cash trying to execute the wrong strategy. However, once the winning strategy has been found, investors should then be impatient for growth and patient for profit as the winning model is scaled up and duplicated. This is the difference between good and bad capital.

In your personal life, it's all too easy to default to a bad money approach as well – to allocate all of your time and energy to your job demands at the expense of spending quality time with your family or on other personal interests. This is easy to do because work will be challenging and filled with interesting projects which are right up your alley whereas creating strong relationships with your family is messy and full of inconclusive results.

Or another trap is sometimes people try and sequence their life's investments. They might think, "Well, if I just work hard on building my career for the next year or two while the kids are young and won't notice it anyways, then I'll be in a position to spend lots of quality time with them later on." The problem is by the time you lift your foot off the career accelerator, you'll find it's too late to get into your child's life in a meaningful way. You have

to invest in a child when he or she is young enough to still be making choices. That's the time to be equipping your child with the tools he or she will need to survive life's challenges, not later on when the demands are more immediate.

The simple dynamic is investments in family and friends need to be made long, long before you see any possible results. You have to give them a higher priority even while you're faced with pressing career demands. If you don't do this, all you'll end up with is a great career but nobody to share it with.

*"If you defer investing your time and energy until you see that you need to, chances are it will already be too late. But as you are getting your career off the ground, you will be tempted to do exactly that: assume you can defer investing in your personal relationships. You cannot. The only way to have those relationships bear fruit in your life is to invest long before you need them."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

*"I genuinely believe that relationships with family and close friends are one of the greatest sources of happiness in life. It sounds simple, but like any important investment, these relationships need consistent attention and care. But there are two forces that will be constantly working against this happening. First, you'll be routinely tempted to invest your resources elsewhere—in things that will provide you with a more immediate payoff. And second, your family and friends rarely shout the loudest to demand your attention. They love you and they want to support your career, too. That can add up to neglecting the people you care about most in the world. The theory of good money, bad money explains that the clock of building a fulfilling relationship is ticking from the start. If you don't nurture and develop those relationships, they won't be there to support you if you find yourself traversing some of the more challenging stretches of life, or as one of the most important sources of happiness in your life."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

2 Put empathy at the center

Many products fail in the marketplace because companies are trying to "push" what they want to sell. By contrast, the most successful products enjoy "pull" from customers who really need them. Empathy for the customer's needs and having the right perspective can make all the difference.

*"When a company understands the jobs that arise in people's lives, and then develops products and the accompanying experiences required in purchasing and using the product to do the job perfectly, it causes customers to instinctively "pull" the product into their lives whenever the job arises. But when a company simply makes a product that other companies also can make—and is a product that can do lots of jobs but none of them well—it will find that customers are rarely loyal to one product versus another. They will switch in a heartbeat when an alternative goes on sale."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

Customers have a job to be done when they buy your product. They buy it with a purpose in mind. The way to success in the marketplace is to position your product to do that job better than any other alternative.

The same is true in professional as well as personal relationships. If you can understand what you're trying to achieve when you're working to build the relationship, the payoffs can be far reaching. For example, one of the most important jobs in your life will be to find a spouse. If you get that right, you stand a much better chance of having a happy marriage. When you have kids, you and your spouse will have fundamentally different roles. If you can understand what your spouse is actually trying to achieve – as opposed to what you think he or she should be achieving – then the chances are good your relationship will grow and prosper.

*"I suspect that if we studied marriage from the job-to-be-done lens, we would find that the husbands and wives who are most loyal to each other are those who have figured out the jobs that their partner needs to be done—and then they do the job reliably and well. I know for me, this has a profound effect. By working to truly understand the job she needs done, and doing it well, I can cause myself to fall more deeply in love with my spouse, and, I hope, her with me. Divorce, on the other hand, often has its roots when one frames marriage only in terms of whether she is giving me what I want. If she isn't, then I dispense with her, and find someone else who will."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

As counterintuitive as it may seem, the path to happy relationships is not to find someone who you think will make you happy. Instead, the key to success is to link up with someone who you want to make happy. If you're prepared to sacrifice to make the other person happy, then great things can happen. This is probably why members of the United States Marine Corps have such a deep sense of attachment to the organization and to their peers. The job they do is so demanding it almost kills them, and yet many Marines have "Semper Fi" (Always faithful) bumper stickers or tattoos. Sacrifice deepens commitment to an extraordinary degree and the same is true in personal relationships as well.

*"It's natural to want the people you love to be happy. What can often be difficult is understanding what your role is in that. Thinking about your relationships from the perspective of the job to be done is the best way to understand what's important to the people who mean the most to you. It allows you to develop true empathy. Asking yourself "What job does my spouse most need me to do?" gives you the ability to think about it in the right unit of analysis. When you approach your relationships from this perspective, the answers will become much more clear than they would by simply speculating about what might be the right thing to do. But you have to go beyond understanding what job your spouse needs you to do. You have to do that job. You'll have to devote your time and energy to the effort, be willing to suppress your own priorities and desires, and focus on doing what is required to make the other person happy. Nor should we be timid in giving our children and our spouses the same opportunities to give of themselves to others. You might think this approach would actually cause resentment in relationships because one person is so clearly giving up something for the other. But I have found that it has the opposite effect. In sacrificing for something worthwhile, you deeply strengthen your commitment to it."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

*"If you work to understand what job you are being hired to do, both professionally and in your personal life, the payoff will be enormous."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

3

Don't outsource raising your children



In the early 1990s, Dell was one of the world's most successful PC manufacturers. It used Asus, a Taiwanese component supplier, to assemble its machines. Asus started off making Dell's circuits and then moved on to making Dell's motherboards. Before long, Asus also started assembling Dell's computers enabling Dell to take its manufacturing assets off its balance sheet. Then in 2005 Asus announced it would start selling its own brand of computers using everything it had learned from Dell.

Dell had made the classic business mistake of failing to understand its core capabilities and protecting them. Capabilities consist of a company's resources, processes and priorities. They are dynamic and are built over time. In business, the prevailing logic is you should never outsource your future because you risk creating competitors. You have to identify what capabilities will enable you to succeed in the future and keep those in-house while you outsource everything else.

The same is true in raising children. Too many well-meaning parents try and give their kids everything they didn't have as children. Rather than doing that, you should be creating challenges for your kids which will help them develop the capabilities they will need to excel in the future. Instead of exposing your children to lots of paid activities, a much better way to help kids get ahead is to give them the opportunity to shoulder responsibility and solve complicated problems for themselves. In reality, it's far more important to build their self-esteem than it is to flood your kids with resources.

Don't outsource raising your children even to the providers of worthwhile and helpful experiences. The only way to turn your children into terrific adults is to take a hands-on approach. Admittedly children will learn to their own timetable rather than yours but rather than outsourcing their upbringing, get involved. Set your kids some hard challenges which will enable them to develop the competencies they will need to excel in life. Give them problems to solve and walk alongside them as they solve them.

*"You have your children's best interests at heart when you provide them with resources. It's what most parents think they're supposed to do—provide for their child. You can compare with your neighbors and friends how many activities your child is involved in, what instruments he is learning, what sports she is playing. It's easy to measure and it makes you feel good. But too much of this loving gesture can actually undermine their becoming the adults you want them to be. Children need to do more than learn new skills. The theory of capabilities suggests they need to be challenged. They need to solve hard problems. They need to develop values. When you find yourself providing more and more experiences that are not giving children an opportunity to be deeply engaged, you are not equipping them with the processes they need to succeed in the future. And if you find yourself handing your children over to other people to give them all these experiences—outsourcing—you are, in fact, losing valuable opportunities to help nurture and develop them into the kind of adults you respect and admire. Children will learn when they're ready to learn, not when you're ready to teach them; if you are not with them as they encounter challenges in their lives, then you are missing important opportunities to shape their priorities—and their lives."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

4 Give your kids experiences, not money

*"The challenges your children face serve an important purpose: they will help them hone and develop the capabilities necessary to succeed throughout their lives. Coping with a difficult teacher, failing at a sport, learning to navigate the complex social structure of cliques in school—all those things become "courses" in the school of experience. We know that people who fail in their jobs often do so not because they are inherently incapable of succeeding, but because their experiences have not prepared them for the challenges of that job—in other words, they've taken the wrong "courses." The natural tendency of many parents is to focus entirely on building your child's résumé: good grades, sports successes, and so on. It would be a mistake, however, to neglect the courses your children need to equip them for the future. Once you have that figured out, work backward: find the right experiences to help them build the skills they'll need to succeed. It's one of the greatest gifts you can give them."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

The business world is full of people who have the "right stuff" – impressive resumes, credentials from the right schools, and so forth. It's generally acknowledged, however, that real life experience in dealing with setbacks and high stress situations is far more valuable than a strong resume. If you're trying to find someone to get an important job done, look for someone who has real-world experience to draw upon and maybe even some failures along the way to learn from.

Translating this lesson to being a parent, rather than obsessing over sending your kids to the right school, focus on creating small opportunities for your kids to take some important real-world courses as early as possible. Reverse engineer these experiences – decide in advance what your child will need to be successful and what specific challenges they need to face right now in order to gain the expertise they will need. By all means encourage them to stretch and to aim for lofty goals but then make sure you're there to help them learn that when you aim high, you're not always going to make it but the key is to pick yourself up, dust off and try again. In fact, you should find a way to show your kids that if they're not occasionally failing, they're not aiming high enough.

This is particularly difficult to do as a parent. Your natural inclination will be to step in and help your kids but if you do that, your children won't develop the resilience and self-esteem they will need for life's challenges. Get to work engineering some courses that will teach your children how to overcome life's roadblocks. Admittedly, doing that doesn't guarantee they will learn what you want them to learn but this is worth iterating until you get it right.

*"The happiest moments of my life have been the few which I have passed at home in the bosom of my family."*

– Thomas Jefferson

*"Our default instincts are so often just to support our children in a difficult moment. But if our children don't face difficult challenges, and sometimes fail along the way, they will not build the resilience they will need throughout their lives. People who hit their first significant career roadblock after years of nonstop achievement often fall apart."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

5 Build a great culture within your family

*"Culture is a way of working together toward common goals that have been followed so frequently and so successfully that people don't even think about trying to do things another way. If a culture has formed, people will autonomously do what they need to do to be successful."*

– Edgar Schein, MIT

Many firms have powerful cultures which shape and influence everything they do. These cultures evolve over time and come about as people work together to solve problems and to figure out what works. In practical terms, culture is a way to make sure the right things happen. When a firm's culture is strong and vibrant, people make consistent decisions and choices.

If you're smart, you'll also build a strong culture within your own family. You'll have a clear set of behaviors which dictate the way your family behaves at all times and in all places. Your family culture should dictate what everyone believes, how they interact with each other and the way you approach things as a family. A good family culture should also encompass how you set priorities, solve problems and work together on what really matters to you.

*"Make no mistake: a culture happens, whether you want it to or not. The only question is how hard you are going to try to influence it. Forming a culture is not an instant loop; it's not something you can decide on, communicate, and then expect it to suddenly work on its own. You need to be sure that when you ask your children to do something, or tell your spouse you're going to do something, you hold to that and follow through. It sounds obvious; most of us want to try to be consistent. But in the pressures of day-to-day living, that can be tough. There will be many days when enforcing the rules is harder on a parent than it is on a child. With good intentions, many exhausted parents find it too difficult to stay consistent with their rules early on—and inadvertently, they allow a culture of laziness or defiance to creep into their family."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

*"All parents aspire to raise the kind of children that they know will make the right choices—even when they themselves are not there to supervise. One of the most effective ways to do that is to build the right family culture. It becomes the informal but powerful set of guidelines about how your family behaves. As people work together to solve challenges repeatedly, norms begin to form. The same is true in your family: when you first run up against a problem or need to get something done together, you'll need to find a solution. It's not just about controlling bad behavior; it's about celebrating the good. What does your family value? What do the kids know they have to do that will get their parents to say, "Well done"? This is what is so powerful about culture. It's like an autopilot. What is critical to understand is that for it to be an effective force, you have to properly program the autopilot—you have to build the culture that you want in your family. If you do not consciously build it and reinforce it from the earliest stages of your family life, a culture will still form—but it will form in ways you may not like. Allowing your children to get away with lazy or disrespectful behavior a few times will begin the process of making it your family's culture. So will telling them that you're proud of them when they work hard to solve a problem."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

3. Living with integrity

Despite the fact more high-profile businesspeople than ever are in prison, the fact is living a life of integrity isn't hard – it's actually very simple. All you need here is one theory:

1 "Full" rather than "marginal" thinking  You live a life of integrity

.....  
*"If you need a machine and don't buy it, then you will ultimately find that you have paid for it and don't have it."*  
 – Henry Ford

*"The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."*  
 – C.S. Lewis

In the late 1990s, Blockbuster totally dominated the movie rental industry. A startup named Netflix came along with the business model that it would mail DVDs to people rather than making them go into a store, and charge a flat monthly fee rather than rental fees and late charges. Blockbuster could easily have squeezed Netflix out of the market by competing head-to-head but Blockbuster's management, noting the returns of Netflix's business model were lower, concluded, "Why should we bother?" Yet by 2011, Netflix had almost 24 million customers and Blockbuster had declared bankruptcy.

So how did this come about? There were at least two reasons:

- Blockbuster thought the niche Netflix was going after was unappealing because margins were lower than for its existing business. Blockbuster didn't factor in the fact this would in effect become the market in the future.
- Blockbuster looked at the new opportunity through the lens of its existing business. In addition to being reluctant to cannibalize its own sales, Blockbuster thought it could happily continue doing what it was already doing. It asked "How can we protect our existing business?" when it should have been asking "If we didn't have an existing business, how could we best serve our customers?"

This phenomena where an upstart unseats the market leader has happened in market after market and is a well established reality of business. It's hard for big, established companies to turn on a dime whereas new market entrants are always willing to bend over backwards to get customers.

So what does this have to do with living a life of integrity? There are loads of opportunities where the cost of doing something unethical "just this once" seems negligible but the real cost will be much higher. It's very easy to say "I know as a general rule this kind of behavior is destructive but in these circumstances, it's okay on a one-off basis." That is how lots of people get off track and never recover.

*"Recent years have offered plenty of examples of people who were extremely well-respected by their colleagues and peers falling from grace because they made this mistake. The political arena is littered with examples of people at the top of their game getting caught doing something that would never have crossed their minds when they first decided they wanted to serve their country. Insider-trading scandals have rocked nearly every generation of Wall Street titans. Scores of athletes, have been caught abusing steroids or exhibiting scandalous personal behavior, sometimes losing their entire careers as a result. Olympic champions have been stripped of their titles, their medals returned. Reporters for major national newspapers have been caught outrageously fabricating details in articles, amid high expectations and deadline pressures to get great stories. All of those people surely began their careers with a true passion for what they were doing. No rising young athlete imagines that he or she will need to find ways to cheat to stay on top. Athletes believe they can work hard enough to earn their success. But then they are faced with that first opportunity to try something that might help them get an edge."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

When you start breaking your own personal code of ethics "just this once", you haven't taken a particularly life-changing decision but it does start you down the road towards problems. Each small decision snowballs and can turn you into the kind of person you never wanted to become. The more small one-off exceptions you make, the big decisions seem less and less important.

*"It's easier to hold to your principles 100 percent of the time than it is to hold to them 98 percent of the time. The boundary—your personal moral line—is powerful, because you don't cross it; if you have justified doing it once, there's nothing to stop you doing it again. Decide what you stand for. And then stand for it all the time. The only way to avoid the consequences of uncomfortable moral concessions in your life is to never start making them in the first place. When the first step down that path presents itself, turn around and walk the other way."*

– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

To stay out of jail and build the kind of life you can be proud of over the long haul:

1. Decide on the kind of person you want to become, taking into account all the dimensions that matter to you personally.
2. Make a deep and abiding commitment to act in ways which will take you towards rather than away from that ideal on a daily basis. Set good priorities and act on them.
3. Understand the true metric by which your life will be measured. It won't be the titles you earn, the awards you receive, the size of your personal bank account or anything else like that. Your happiness and your true worth will be measured by the number of individuals you helped, one by one, become better people. If you take every opportunity within your individual reach to help people in ways which are tailored to their individual circumstances, then you'll feel good about what you've achieved.

*"We hope that this book will also bolster your resolve to conduct your life with integrity. But most of all, we hope that in the end, we all will be judged a success by the metric that matters most. How will you measure your life?"*

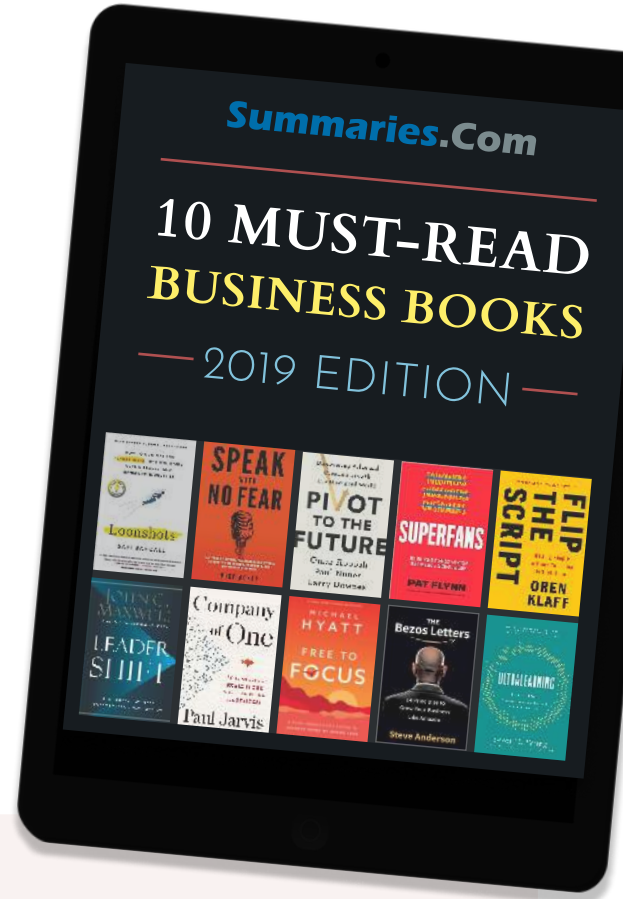
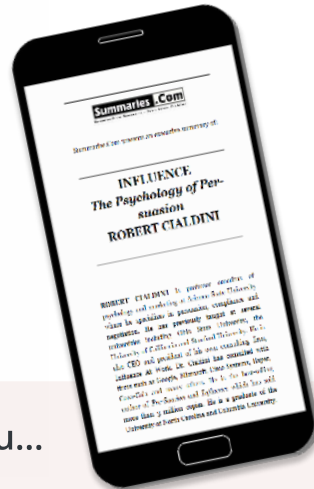
– Clayton Christensen, James Allworth and Karen Dillon

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