

A Life Worth Living

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William F. Giruzzi

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Acknowledgement

If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.
—Sir Isaac Newton

I have wanted to write a book for years. I tried on many occasions but nothing came. Then, one day in late fall 2004, I sat down at my computer and just started writing. I couldn't stop; I guess I must have been ready. Funny thing is, while the essence of that first draft is in here somewhere, that version seems a distant memory. I probably still have people in my life who won't believe the book is finished until they are holding it in their hands. I don't know what the problem is—I've only finished it about thirty times, give or take a few.

This acknowledgement is to those people who always believed in me.

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to the other side. It was transformational. The leadership you provided is a true testament to your growth and development as a new mind.

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Thanks to my family, who supported me throughout my life: Pam, for always making me laugh; Rocco, for being my big brother. Mom and Dad, what can I say? Mom, you taught me to nurture others. Dad, you taught me to innovate and to be of service to others. Thank you both for your endless hours of work and devotion to give me every opportunity in life and for always being proud as I followed my own pathway.

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Finally, to Lisa, my wife, thank you for your love. Thank you for always believing in me. Thank you for thinking that every version was miles above the last. Mostly though, thank you for the best conversations I've had in my life. I love you.

These are some of my giants, and it's on their shoulders that I offer this book to you.

Introduction

The purpose of this book is broad and bold: This book is about a new vision for human beings and our place in the world. This book is about the purpose of our lives. This book is about a new paradigm.

Paradigm? People sometimes cringe and stop listening when they hear the word paradigm. While it may sound “neo-business,” a paradigm is simply a set of assumptions or concepts that constitute a way of viewing reality. Thus, Newtonian physics is a paradigm. Quantum physics is a paradigm. The Copernican view of the universe, the Ptolemaic view, the Freudian view of psychology, the Jungian—all of these are paradigms. They all represent a set of concepts and assumptions that constitute a way of viewing and understanding what’s happening in reality. Still, the term “paradigm” has become overused and misunderstood. This has led some to mistrust the term. Some believe it implies that something isn’t actually happening out here in the “real world”; that “it’s all in your head.” This is not the case. An apple really does fall from a tree; there really is an electromagnetic wave making it to your television that results in a picture. If you smash your car into a wall, there will be consequences.

The assumptions of quantum physics, however, do make something different available to physicists than the assumptions of Newtonian physics. Newtonian physics led to one level

of understanding of how the universe works, while quantum physics is leading to a deeper level of understanding. Each has created a different view of what's happening in reality.

Here's a simple example to further demonstrate the idea of a paradigm. Below, there are two points—A and B—drawn in Figure 1. Draw this diagram on a separate sheet of paper and then draw a connecting line between points A and B.



Fig. 1

If you are like most people who have completed this exercise, you connected points A and B with a straight line, as illustrated in Figure 2.



Fig. 2

Connecting the points with a straight line likely was automatic. You probably didn't even stop to consider that you could have connected them differently. In fact, you may have imagined a straight line between the two points, even before seeing the instruction to connect them. If you think about it, there are an infinite number of ways to connect points A and B other than with a straight line.¹

It's not that your assumption—in this case, something like “the shortest distance between two points is a straight line”—isn't true; it's that in making the choice to draw a straight line between points A and B, you likely were not even aware you were being guided by an underlying assumption. *Paradigms are so powerful that they cause people to take particular actions without realizing an assumption is guiding—even dictating or limiting—their actions.* Thus, when directed to connect the points, most people automatically do so with a straight line. That's the power of a paradigm.

Paradigms, however, are not just formal models found in physics and math. Paradigms influence how we think about

1. This is especially true if you consider three-dimensional pathways (e.g., pathways coming out of the book). For instance, imagine a line coming out of the book at point A, straight toward your face, doing a circle around your head, and then landing back on the book at point B. Even if we just consider two-dimensional pathways, there are still many more than just a straight line.

and live every aspect of our lives. There are paradigms that influence how we are in our intimate relationships, how we act as parents, how we choose a mate, and how we work. There is a paradigm of how to live.

Consider the following question: Which do you think is more likely to happen? Someday we will be living on Mars, or someday we will develop a way of living on this planet where all people are fulfilled. Everyone to whom I've posed this question has answered, without fail, that it is more likely that we will one day live on Mars. People have such a strong faith and belief in our ability to invent things, to invent technology, and to discover the knowledge required for us to invent these innovations. But when it comes to discovering knowledge of how people can live fulfilling, healthy, happy lives, people tend to throw their hands up in frustration and helplessness. "There is no such knowledge. People are all so different; how could there be knowledge applicable to all?" Therein lies the limitation of the paradigm in which we live. We've come to believe that because we don't have the knowledge of how to live in a way that works for all people, that knowledge doesn't exist. I am not talking about a utopia where there is no tragedy or no disagreement; where nothing bad happens and where everyone is always nice to each other. I am talking about a way to live where real people are living real lives in a more fulfilling way.

I am talking about a life worth living.

Are *you* living a life worth living?

Each of us has to answer that question for ourselves, and if your answer is "Yes, I am," you'll get no argument from me. The way you live is not some horrible atrocity from which I am going to save you. If your answer, however, is "No, I am not," I will caution you right now that this book will not give you a laundry list of things to do to make your life better. This book aims to do something more powerful than that. This book is going to cause you to see life—to see *your* life—in a differ-

ent light. It's going to give you a different view of life. Now, if you think this book should do more than that, I invite you to recall my simple "A to B" exercise. The number of pathways from A to B is limitless, yet your action likely was limited to one quick, automatic choice. This limitation did not exist in reality; it existed only in your mind. These same limitations of mind exist in how you live your life. Now, are the pathways limitless from where you are to where you want to be? I don't know, but there are certainly more than you perceive. If you are suffering, struggling, or otherwise frustrated by trying to live a fulfilling life—a life worth living—you are doing so unnecessarily.

And so, it is not necessary for me to give you new actions; it is only necessary for you to see. By the end of this book, you'll have a new vision of life, and you'll have a new vision of yourself.

Life is a wonder, and it's time for you to see.

Work: A Cultural Phenomenon

If someone were asked to describe our way of life, he or she likely would say something like the following:

We are born, and we grow up. At around age five, we start going to school, where we learn things to prepare us for life. About twelve years later, we graduate high school, and some of us move right into the work force. Others go on to college, first as an undergraduate and then, for some, continuing on to get a master's degree or beyond. At some point we find work—we provide services and receive a paycheck in return—because we all need money to live—to pay for food and shelter and to take care of ourselves. We work at our jobs for about thirty to forty years, with two weeks vacation per year and weekends off. At some point we retire, at which time we hope that we have saved enough money to live well for the rest of our lives. We just try to enjoy the rest of our lives.

Clearly, the above statement doesn't begin to capture the complexity of our way of life; it doesn't address government, religion, relationships, or war. It makes no reference to political systems, economic systems, transportation systems, or technology. The list could go on, but while there certainly is more to

our way of life, working or preparing ourselves to work is how we spend most of our waking hours. Life requires us to make a living, and so work is a defining characteristic of any way of life. We refer to some of our ancestors as hunter-gatherers or farmers because of the way they made a living. Today, working in business defines our way of life.

We each have our own personal experiences with work; some of us love our work, but many of us don't love our work—or even like it. The Gallup Organization conducted a study that gives us an idea of how many Americans enjoy the work they do. Gallup found that only 29% of U.S. workers are engaged in their work. Of the remaining 71%, 55% are not engaged in their work, and 16% are actively disengaged. Curt Coffman, co-author of *First Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently* and consultant for the Gallup Organization, described the distinction of being engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged from work in the following way:

The “engaged” employees are builders. They use their talents, develop productive relationships, and multiply their effectiveness through those relationships. They perform at consistently high levels. They drive innovation and move their organization forward. The employees that are “not engaged” aren't necessarily negative or positive about their company. They basically take a wait-and-see attitude toward their job, their employer, and their coworkers. They hang back and don't commit themselves.

This brings us to the “actively disengaged” employees—the “cave dwellers.” They're “**C**onsistently **A**gainst **V**irtually **E**verything.” We've all worked with an actively disengaged employee who is not just unhappy at work; he *acts out* that unhappiness. Every day, actively disengaged employees tear down what their engaged coworkers are building.¹

The next time you go to work, stop and look around, and consider that there are only three people out of ten who are truly engaged in their work. The rest are just going through the motions. Certainly, most of them are getting their work done, but they are not engaged. If you ask them what they are look-

1. “The High Cost of Disengaged Employees: There are ‘cave dwellers’ in your ranks, and they're hurting your company,” *Gallup Management Journal*, April 15, 2002.

ing forward to, chances are they are simply living for the next reprieve—the next break, lunch, five o’clock, the weekend, or the next vacation. The intention here is not to debate your personal experience of work, but remember: 71% of people are not engaged in or are actively disengaged from their work. That’s a cultural phenomenon. Statistics aside, this phenomenon is powerfully captured in three well-known phrases: Monday morning blues, Wednesday hump day, and “Thank God it’s Friday!”

Monday morning blues—the drudgery begins. My wife, Lisa, was once on an elevator when a man entered, looking depressed. She greeted him with “How are you?” He looked at her pitifully and sighed, “It’s Monday.” My wife sighed herself, a bit deflated. If this question and answer had taken place in a courtroom, one might expect that opposing counsel would have jumped up and shouted, “Objection! Non-responsive to the question!” In life, though, the answer “It’s Monday” to the question “How are you?” carries a very clear meaning, one that is almost akin to “It’s time to go back to prison and continue serving my sentence.” Even if you are one of the lucky ones who doesn’t personally experience Monday morning blues, you still understand what the phrase means, and chances are you could spot a case of Monday morning blues just as easily as you could spot a case of chickenpox.

Then, there’s Wednesday hump day. By the time Wednesday rolls around, you have had sufficient time to separate yourself from the fun and freedom of the weekend. You are thick in the middle of the workweek. You can begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel—the light of the weekend, of freedom. By the time Wednesday is over, 60% of the workweek will be behind you.

Then, finally, it’s here—the magical day has arrived. It’s dress-down day. It’s Friday. Yes, there is still work to be done, but it’s just one day—you can do one day. There is a buzz of excitement in the air. People are working, but you can feel a different energy in the office. Finally, the clock hits five o’clock, and you burst through the doors. You stop and look up at the

heavens, and you shout, “Thank God it’s Friday!” You are on a forty-eight-hour furlough. You are free to do exactly what you want to do, when you want to do it.

Does this sound at all insane to you? I’ve always found it intriguing that although people complain about work—they complain about having to go to work, they complain about their supervisors, they complain about management—typically, the only things they ever request to make things better are things that have nothing to do with the work itself. People will ask for an increase in salary, more vacation time, better benefits—things that impact the quality of life *outside* of work—but they don’t seem to demand that the work itself be more fulfilling; that would be a change that would really impact their quality of life. Certainly money, vacation time, and other benefits are important and impact the quality of our lives, but even when we acquire these things, we often continue to dread the experience of work.

Every day, people trade their time, their passion, their fulfillment, and their heart for a paycheck and benefits. They trade fulfillment now for the promise of fulfillment in the future. Life always seems to be about the next weekend, the next vacation, and finally, if you are lucky enough to live that long, retirement. Life is not about living; it’s about surviving—surviving long enough to really live.

Does this all sound insane now?

The insanity of it all made me wonder: “What could possibly be going on that people would make such a trade?” I’ve concluded that it is actually not a trade at all. A trade implies a conscious decision to give up something in exchange for something else. In my mind, there is only one reason why people would give up their passion and fulfillment in exchange for thirty to forty years of drudgery and security.

They must have felt there was no choice at all.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCOVERY

NOTE: At the end of each chapter, I've included questions to help you more fully explore the ideas in this book. Answering these questions is not the point of this book; use them or don't use them. It's possible to not answer these questions and get the value from this book, and it's possible to answer these questions and not get the value. Don't misunderstand—these questions can be extremely powerful and may, in fact, be key to helping you get the value of this book. They simply are not *necessary*, nor is it the point that you be able to answer them. In short, use them as you see fit.

1. What other things would you include to describe our way of life?
2. It's easy to say that there are different ways of life around the world because there are different cultures, governments, etc. What if you take the point of view that they are all different expressions of the same way of life? How does that change how you think about it? What is *the* way of life that is represented in all of the different expressions?
3. What are the things you demand at work? What are the things that would really make a difference in your quality of life? Are these things the same?
4. "There's life and then there's work." We talk about balancing work and life. Does that seem odd to you? Work is a part of life, and yet we divided the line in a place where it can't be divided. What does this say about how we perceive life, work, and ourselves?