

Chapter One:

Stuck In The Starting Blocks

Imagine you're watching an Olympic hundred-meter dash. Can you visualize the scene? The runners are pacing nervously around the starting area, stretching.

“Ready,” calls the starting official.

The runners carefully place their feet in the starting blocks and crouch into their starting positions.

“Set.”

Like coiled springs they wait, eyes focused on the finish line. The starting pistol is poised high in the air.

BANG!

They’re off! Finely tuned bodies in a blur of motion catapult down the track.

But wait! One runner is still stuck in the blocks. He hasn’t moved! There’s something...could it be glue, or flypaper, or something...holding him back.

What if that really happened? How would you react? I suspect I’d be inclined to laugh. What a funny scene – a runner stuck in the blocks!

But then I’d empathize with that poor runner. I wouldn’t want that to happen to me, or to anyone I know.

Unfortunately, something similar does happen to many of us at different times in our lives. We get stuck and we can’t seem to get traction. But I’m thankful that I’m often able to help people in this situation, because I’m a business coach.

As a coach, I delight in helping people leap over the hurdles that threaten to keep them from winning in life. It thrills me to see my clients unleash their potential and catapult toward their goals.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Are you stuck in the starting blocks, either personally or professionally? Are you putting out lots of effort for very little accomplishment and satisfaction? If so, maybe you can identify with some of these people I know.

Roger has been in the financial services field for more than forty years, and has been the president of his own firm for fifteen. As he sat across the desk from me, tears came to his eyes. "I'm sixty years old, and this business is not where it should be. It's not growing, and I don't know how to make it grow. One day last week five of my employees were out sick. I feel frustrated and overwhelmed. Maybe I should just retire, but that's not what I really want."

I'll tell you the rest of Roger's story later in the book. He became a client, and the ending is happier than the beginning. But first, allow me to introduce you to some more people I know.

George was successfully engaged in research for a company that develops and markets food products. Suddenly one of his two partners died, and he had to move into marketing and management. But George didn't know how to run a business. He didn't know how to develop a plan and move forward. He felt paralyzed.

Teresa develops new business for a construction company of about fifty employees. She wanted to be more successful, but she was hindered by her boss's refusal to develop a business plan. "I don't know where the company's going," she admitted, "and I don't know where I'm going."

Ralph is a manager for a company with \$1 billion in annual sales, and he's underperforming. Actually, he doesn't like his job, but he earns over \$200,000 per year. He's unhappy, but he's afraid to leave.

I'll reintroduce you to all of these folks later, in Chapter 3, and give you the rest of their stories. You'll find them encouraging.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you relate to any of their predicaments? Are you stuck in situations that cause you tremendous frustration? Do you feel as if you're running like crazy and getting nowhere? Are some things demanding lots of your attention, while other more important goals and desires suffer from neglect?

When people ask me to be their coach, they are typically acting out of either desperation or inspiration. The desperate ones often are in anguish and pain. They're stuck in situations they can't tolerate much longer. They know they need to change and they want to change, but they need help.

Others come to me out of inspiration. They are inspired to take their lives to the next level. They're doing well, but they know they can do better. They're not satisfied with "good enough." They want to be the best they can be.

If you're in either of those categories, I wrote this book for you. It combines sound principles with exercises and real-life examples to make it as practical as possible. I hope you'll not just read it once, but that you'll use it as a reference to make sure you stay on track throughout your life.

BURIED TREASURE

There's another category of people I encounter. This group doesn't see the need for change because they've become numb to the pain. Perhaps because they don't think change is possible, they've pushed their hearts' desires down below the conscious level. On the outside they may appear to be doing OK, but inside they have little or no passion and joy. I call them "nummies."

How do I know about this group of nummies? First, statistics consistently show that 60 percent to 70 percent of American workers are unhappy in their jobs. Imagine that! Two out of every three workers almost certainly are performing below their potential and settling for less accomplishment and satisfaction than they should.

Second, from published research and from my experiences as a coach, I know that most people struggle with attaining balance in their lives. Pressures from work cause them to short-change their personal lives, and vice versa. Demands from multiple directions leave them feeling tense, guilty, cheated, and frustrated.

I encourage you to use the exercises in the next chapter to help you look beneath the surface.

When you dig down deep, you may uncover a buried treasure – your passion. Perhaps you’ll realize that you desire something different, but that you’ve been suppressing your desire because you didn’t think change was possible. If you’re a “nummie,” I wrote this book for you, too.

FACING CHANGE

All changes are inconvenient; some changes are scary; a few changes are even risky. As you proceed through this book and spot areas that need change, you will confront some barriers that are within you. You will come face to face with your own values, attitudes, disappointments, and fears.

You may find that you need to change your circumstances in order to achieve your goals. Such change usually requires courage, wisdom, and perseverance. You also may realize that you have to change yourself. That always requires courage, wisdom, and perseverance...and usually some humility, as well.

Why humility? Because in order to change, you need to admit to yourself, and often to some others, that you’re stuck. And more than likely you’ll need to ask for help. It’s difficult to see

ourselves clearly and objectively. In order to move beyond the blocks that hinder our success, we usually need the insights and encouragement of other people.

Remember Ralph, the unhappy manager who earns more than \$200,000 a year? In order to bring fulfillment into his life, he may have to be willing to give up the perceived security of that lucrative job. He may have to take risks and change his values. That's a difficult assignment, especially alone.

I strongly believe you will be most successful and most fulfilled when you are living your passion. You will attain the most significant accomplishments when your passion and your goals are aligned.

I hope this book inspires you to find your passion and go for it. I hope it helps you discover what you were created to do and do it!

The sign on the door of opportunity reads PUSH.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN