



True Vocation

The intersection of your passion,
needs of the world that you
deeply care about, and your
strength

EXCERPTED FROM

THE BOOMERANG APPROACH
A Straightforward Approach to Align
Your Career with What You Care About

BY

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Chapter 2

True Vocation

*“Your true vocation is the place
where your deep gladness meets the
world’s deep need.”*

~ Frederick Buechner²

Do you remember a moment in your life when you were “in the flow,” when you worked on something and you were forgetting time and space, when you felt happy, creative, and fulfilled, and when you knew you were making an important contribution? You might have worked by yourself or in a team.

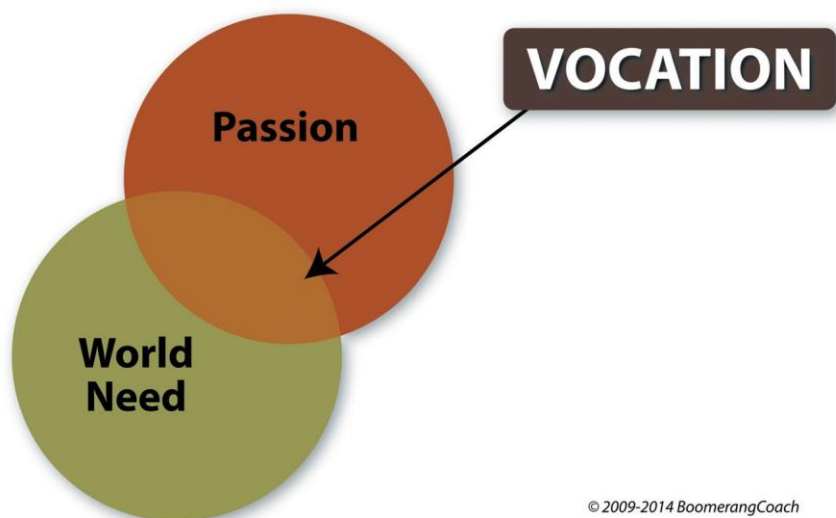
Frederick Buechner defines work that is of service to the *world’s deep needs*, and that at the same time makes us *deeply glad or happy* – in other words, work that we are passionate about – as *true vocation*. If you work on something that matters, that is important to others or the world, and that at the same time involves activities you deeply enjoy doing, then you are at the intersection of what Frederick Buechner defines as *true vocation*.

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I had this kind of experience when I was part of a team working on a research and development project. We met every morning for an hour or two to discuss the status of the project and the challenges we had, and we helped each other with great enthusiasm and support. Then we went off for the rest of the day to each work on our part of the project. Each morning I couldn't wait to share the progress I had made and also hear what the other team members had found out. The time was flying, and we had many moments of sharing and celebrating our progress along the way. I was in the flow. The work fulfilled both conditions: I was doing work I was passionate about (in my case, that was learning and developing with others) and at the same time we were convinced that the results of the research and development we were doing would be an important contribution to the organization, and had the potential to help solve important problems in the world we cared about.

If you have experienced similar moments in your life, then very likely you have been doing work related to your true vocation as Frederick Buechner defined it.

In a graphic representation of Frederick Buechner's quotation, with one circle representing your passion and the other circle representing the needs in the world you care about, the intersection of the two circles represents the true vocation model according to Buechner.



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After I became inspired by Frederick Buechner's quote, I initially used the two-circle model for coaching my clients who wanted to discover or re-discover their passion and purpose. My clients liked the simplicity of the model. However, I noticed after a while that something was missing from the model: a person's *strengths*, talents, or gifts.

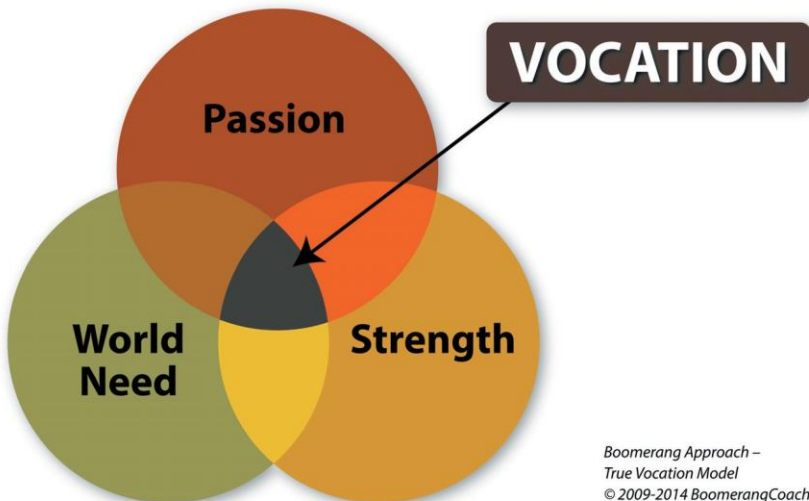
You might not recognize your strengths or talents because they come with ease. You don't have to work as hard for them as you do for your weaknesses. On the contrary, you might be much more aware of your weaknesses, because you wanted to overcome them but it is hard and challenging to improve in those areas.

Reflecting on the experience of my research and development project, at the beginning of the project I was not fully aware of the strengths that I brought to the project. I had become the informal facilitator of our working sessions without ever formally discussing and agreeing on it. The reason why I was not aware is that it happened natu-

rally for me. During our daily meetings, I would ask questions a facilitator or session leader would ask and the team seemed thankful to engage in the process I facilitated. The other team members recognized what I had to offer and embraced me in that role. At the same time, I recognized talents and strengths other team members had, such as mathematical talent and operational strength. I appreciated their contributions in those areas and embraced my team members equally in their roles.

After testing the strength concept with many of my coaching clients successfully, I added *strength* as the third circle to the model. This then became the *True Vocation Model*, shown below, which I have been using for years to guide clients through the process of finding their true vocation. The following graph illustrates *true vocation* at the intersection of the passion, strength, and world need circles.

True Vocation Model



If you can find a role at the intersection of your passion, needs of the world that you deeply care about, and your strength, you will have found your true vocation. In such a role you can't wait to get out of bed in the morning, you will feel passion for your work, and you will apply your strengths, rather than focusing on improving your weaknesses. You will feel in the flow more often and you will feel a sense of purpose, because you are making a contribution to the world, your organization, your community, or your family, similar to the state I experienced during the research and development project. In that state of being, you will feel happier.

One of my clients, Gabriele, had been working as a professional airline pilot for more than 25 years. In the earlier part of her life, flying had been her dream job. Gabriele still enjoyed flying as a hobby but was tired of flying professionally. The airline industry had gone through dramatic changes, putting more and more pressure on pilots, with busier and more irregular flight schedules, as well as making it less rewarding by reducing benefits and pay. When she asked me to coach her, she had been physically exhausted, dissatisfied with her job, and thinking about a career change for several years.

Originally her plan was to retire in her mid-50s, live off her airline pension, and then follow her passions. But when the airline suddenly canceled her pension plan, she had to postpone her retirement plans and rethink how she could follow her dream. Gabriele was frustrated by the situation, and disappointed with her employer and the industry she had worked in for so long. Gabriele couldn't see a solution to her problem and reached out to me for help.

In my first coaching session I asked Gabriele about her goals for the coaching. She explained her situation and that she dreamed of a new career that would be more aligned with what she truly cared about. She said, “I have too many ideas about what I could do and can’t come to a decision. I need your help in structuring my thoughts and prioritizing my ideas for what I want to do. I am also trying to figure out how I can support myself financially when I give up flying.” And she wanted to give up flying desperately.

I suggested that Gabriele identify first her passion, her strengths, and the issues in the world she cared about most so that she could then assess her ideas for possible roles against those criteria. Gabriele liked the idea of the structured approach and agreed to follow my proposed process.

In the same way that I did with Gabriele and many of my other clients, the next three chapters (chapters 3, 4, and 5) will lead you through simple exercises that help you create self-awareness about your passion, strengths, and the needs of the world that you most care about. Chapter 6 will then show how to define possible roles at the intersection of those three areas, and Chapters 7 and 8 will help you determine how to test and transition successfully into a new role.

Now let’s go deeper into each of the three circles and the related exercises. I advise you to choose a partner (for example a trusted friend, family member, or colleague). If you are working on your career change with your manager or a career coach you can partner with him or her on these exercises.

For Coaches and Managers:

In my experience and supported by research, employee engagement can be maximized if the employee's role and career in the organization is aligned with the employee's passion, purpose, and strengths.

PASSION x PURPOSE x STRENGTH = MAXIMIZES ENGAGEMENT

Helping your employees gain greater self-awareness and clarity about their career direction and supporting them in their career development and transitions can have huge benefits, not only for the employees, but also for the organization. Employees who know that they are on the right career path and supported by their manager are much more engaged and perform better.

Supporting your employees during the process outlined in this book can help you develop a better understanding of your employees' passion, purpose, and strength. You can then use this awareness to guide and support them in their career development and help them align their roles in the organization with their individual purpose and the purpose of the organization.

I advise you to also read and work through the following chapters. The end of each chapter has special advice for how to best guide and support your coachee through each step in the process. By reading and doing the exercises while applying your new skills in coaching others, you will experience a deeper and more sustained learning for yourself.

The Boomerang Approach

Return to Purpose, Ignite Your Passion:

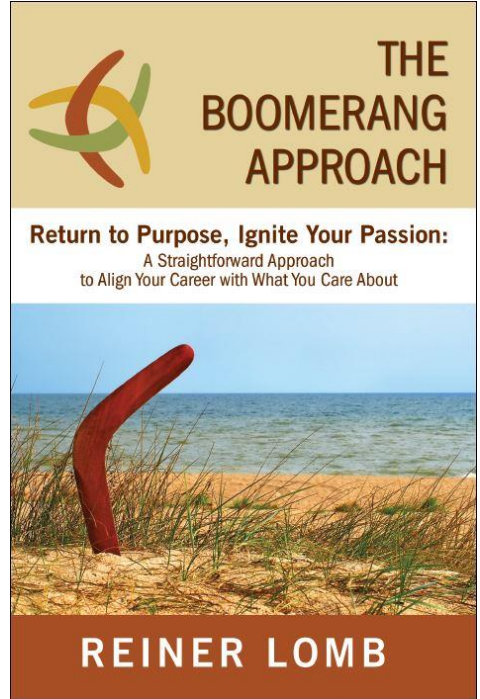
A Straightforward Approach to Align Your Career with What You Care About

by Reiner Lomb

For people who are looking for meaning in their work, and for the coaches and managers who support them.

Do you:

- feel stuck in your career, with no enthusiasm for your work?
- wonder what you'll do after retirement, or what your legacy will be?
- long to align your work with the issues you care about most?
- hesitate to change your career because you fear starting over, financial risk, or losing professional status?



The Boomerang Approach offers tools to conquer these issues and transition successfully to an energizing career rich with personal meaning. If you're a professional coach, a counselor, or a manager supporting others in their own career-development and transition, these tools are designed to assist your work, too.

Available on Amazon at:

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0615979769/>

About the Author

Reiner Lomb is an Executive Coach and Business Consultant. As Founder and President of *BoomerangCoach*, LLC, he specializes in leadership and career development, executive coaching, international business and cross-cultural teamwork. Born in Germany, Reiner lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and works with clients worldwide.

Testimonials

“Finding your vocation involves intuition and introspection as well as linear action planning – a combination that was foreign to me. *The Boomerang Approach* guided me through this process by providing a structured, yet simple path of personal and professional self-exploration. The end result provided me with a clear vision of my authentic professional self, my vocation, and the steps I need to take to achieve it.”

— **Megan Sanicki**

Associate Director at Drupal Association

“Reiner’s methods, insights and excellent questions made the transition much more successful than I would have expected at the outset. His experience and wisdom captured in this book are invaluable assets to anyone searching for a meaningful career and an excellent guide to get you through the challenges of the transition.”

— **David Axelrod**

Co-Founder and Principal at Brewery Hill Beer Company

“Reiner helped me to rediscover my passions and my strengths using *The Boomerang Approach* described in this book and guided me through some difficult transitions which have now finally led me to a career that I truly enjoy! This book is a wonderful tool for anyone who is considering a career change and wants to bring energy and passion back to life!”

— **Reinold Schneller**

Geschäftsführer and Senior Vice President,
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