



CHAPTER ONE

Setting Your Sights

How clearly do you see the mountain in your life? Do you have a clear picture of what you aspire to be and do? Take a moment to clarify your vision by assessing honestly where you are in your life right now compared with where you want to be.

In what areas of your life are you compromising and settling for less than the best? Is there an unrealized passion buried beneath the surface of your life?

What decisions do you need to make that you have been postponing? What unsatisfactory choices are you continuing to make?

Maybe you've been putting off some decisions or actions because the timing is not right. That's a good thing. It's wise to be patient. But if you've simply been procrastinating because of indecisiveness or fear, you need to admit that you're stuck.

You won't positively move ahead with your personal life and your career if you sit at the base of the mountain and wish you were at the top. Look honestly at the reasons you're stuck, and then decide what you're going to do about it.

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

"I notice that a lot of women are reticent to take ownership," said Lynne Brookes. "They say they want to be leaders and managers, but they also seem to be content staying in the background. You have to know what you want and be willing to take the steps to get it."

Below are some common situations from the lives of women I know. Can you identify with one or more of them?

- ❑ Lauren just turned forty. She loves her husband and her two kids. But she also loves her career, and she's feeling pulled apart by competing demands. She's beginning to doubt that it's possible to move ahead with her career and care for her family at the same time.
- ❑ Jill is already a successful director in a respected corporation, and she'd like to be a vice president. But she's not sure she can muster the necessary energy and commitment to get to the next level. She wonders if she's gone about as far as she can go within the corporate environment.
- ❑ Barbara knows she should be thrilled about her recent promotion, but actually her primary emotion is fear. "I'm nervous about whether I can handle my new responsibilities," she confides to a friend.
- ❑ Alicia likes her job and she's good at it. But as the only woman at her level, she often feels like a figure skater on an ice hockey team. She's trying to decide whether she can succeed in a "man's world" without sacrificing her feminine identity.

- ❑ Frances keeps postponing her decision to resume her career. First it was because of the ages of her children; now it's because her husband is thinking about changing jobs. It seems she always has to put her own interests on the back burner.
- ❑ Pam wants to start her own business, but she's worried that she doesn't have the knowledge and the connections to be successful on her own. Her current full-time job leaves very little time for laying the necessary ground-work for the transition.
- ❑ Roberta is in her mid-twenties and just starting her career. She likes her job as a manager for a growing company, but she doesn't know enough about her future options to effectively plan her career path. One of her biggest problems is that she doesn't know what she doesn't know.
- ❑ Dorothy is earning a comfortable salary working for a big corporation, but she's not happy in her job. Day after day she goes through the motions with little or no sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. But she's

scared to leave the “safety and security” of her present salary and position.

Do you struggle with any of the challenges mentioned above? Do you feel somewhat frozen in your tracks as you face some important decision? What would you really like to change about your life?

Looking at what you don't want will help you pinpoint what you do want. Admitting that you're stuck will increase your motivation to change. Recognizing your discontent will strengthen your desire.

Take a moment to define clearly what you want your life to look like. Identify what mountain you want to climb to maximize your potential and fully realize your sense of accomplishment. Reflect on your life, your passion, and your dreams until you can clearly envision what you want to be and do.

Start by writing down what you want. Writing produces clarity, clarity inspires passion, and passion strengthens commitment. When you are very clear about where you want to go, you will be better able to chart your path, and you will be more motivated to undertake the journey. In the back of this book you'll find a journal. There's no better time than right now to begin writing.

When I first started working with Sarah, she

had no interest in writing down her goals. She lived mostly in the moment, taking things as they came. Her job with a large company wasn't challenging, but she never considered leaving. If she had thoughts about what she wanted to do with her life, she rarely translated them into actions.

Over time, as I was able to convince Sarah of the value of putting her goals in writing, she went through a remarkable transformation. Right before my eyes this reactive survivor became an active achiever. On her own initiative, she developed a resume, created a list of contacts she wanted to consult, compiled a list of companies she wanted to work for, spoke to recruiters, went on interviews, and landed an excellent job with a smaller company.

Today Sarah is extremely productive and fulfilled in her new position. And, as she would readily acknowledge, she's there because she began to clarify her goals when she started writing them down.

Sue Baker told me about a high-powered manager in a software company who changed her whole career as a result of writing down her goals. This woman was making a lot of money, but she wasn't doing what she wanted to do.

"We met together every week for twelve weeks," Sue related, "and each week I gave her the same

homework assignment. I asked her to write down where she was at that moment, where she wanted to be, and how she planned to get there. Gradually she realized that she wanted to pursue social work. ‘You know,’ she told me, ‘I’ve always wanted to work with people as a psychologist, but I’ve never allowed myself to do it.’ Today she’s taking the first step toward her goal by getting a degree in psychology at a local college. The process of writing down her desires and goals translated into positive actions.”

CULTIVATE A SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE

Mountain climbing is not for the faint of heart. It requires a spirit of adventure.

Likewise, you will need a spirit of adventure in order to achieve your personal and professional goals. All progress requires change, and all change entails risks.

Many people are terrified of change. I’ve noticed that some people become frightened when I simply suggest that they periodically update their resume. The mere thought of changing jobs, even when no immediate change is contemplated, is a traumatic experience for them. Their comfort zone has a pull

several times greater than the force of gravity.

“I have a friend who is a successful project manager,” said Sue Baker, “but she’s unhappy working in technology. She’d like to work with people as a mentor and coach, and she could do it. She already has a master’s degree in the field. But because of fear she doesn’t make the effort to prepare a resume and look for that kind of job.”

To overcome inertia and fear of change, focus on the rewards you will enjoy when you realize your dreams. Clearly picturing your goal will increase your passion and motivation.

I first met David and Jennifer Hodges when they were living in New York City. Both had excellent jobs that paid high salaries, but they weren’t truly happy. So they sat down together and evaluated their lives.

Both agreed they would like to live in North Carolina and start their own businesses. Since they had wisely saved money and they didn’t have any children, there was nothing holding them back except the fear of uncertainty. But inspired by a clear vision, they stepped out of their comfort zones and made the move.

Dave started his own consulting business in a field closely related to his previous work. Jennifer made a 180 degree change in her vocation: she

started her own dog-grooming business. Both are very successful and happy. Jennifer's not making as much money as she used to, but she's enormously fulfilled. Neither has any desire to return to big-city, big-company life.

Lynne Brookes has done an outstanding job of evaluating options in light of her long-term career and personal priorities. When she was twenty-nine, she left an excellent position with an established company in California and moved to Pennsylvania to join Cephalon, which at that time was a fledgling pharmaceutical startup.

"My co-workers told me I was crazy to take such a big risk and leave all the security and benefits of my current job," says Lynne, "but I saw it as a greater opportunity to learn and grow. The people presenting their values to me had families, but I was single and those things weren't as important to me. It turned out to be a good decision. Because Cephalon was small, I learned a lot very, very quickly. As a product manager, I was doing sales training, sales operations, publications, marketing...anything that needed to be done."

Since Lynne joined Cephalon in 1995, it has grown into a billion-dollar company. She has contributed significantly to the organization's success, and today she holds a senior position there.

If you're overly afraid of making mistakes, you will never enjoy the sense of accomplishment and fulfillment that comes from growing and stretching to reach your full potential. To grow, you must be willing to make mistakes and risk failure.

Sue Baker told me about how fear of failure adversely affected a woman in her organization who got promoted from a consultant in a group to the manager of the group. "She had the ability to do the job," Sue said, "but she lacked confidence. She felt uncomfortable telling her former peers what to do. To make matters worse, most of the people who now reported to her were men, and one in particular began taking her to task about her promotion. Under the pressure, she tried harder to avoid mistakes, which caused her to make more mistakes, which in turn caused her to lose more confidence. It was a self-defeating cycle. As a result of coaching, she worked through a lot of those issues and did much better. 'The voice in my head that kept questioning everything I was doing began to quiet down,' she told me."

"I've learned to 'celebrate failures,' said Kim Woodworth. "You have to make it okay to try things that don't work out. That's the only way to learn and make products, strategies, and other things

better. I attribute a lot of my success to my willingness to take risks. I was extremely mobile early in my career, and I took advantage of opportunities. I was willing to step out and step up to new things, and I had very little ‘fear of loss.’”

Kim went on to tell me about the biggest professional risk of her life. In her early twenties, she got out of her comfort zone and moved from Wichita, Kansas, to Nashville, Tennessee, to take a job in radio. “Some of it was dumb luck,” she related, “and I was young enough not to be fearful. But I landed with a company that believed in its people. They saw something in me that I did not see in myself at the time, and they began mentoring me and growing me. Because of the preparation I received in that job, I went on to manage my first radio station when I was only twenty-seven years old.”

I can relate to Kim’s story, because I also took a risk early on that changed the course of my entire career. My husband, Tim, and I had been married only a few years, and I was pregnant with our first child. Unexpectedly, Tim’s company transferred him to San Diego, California. Picking up and moving again was quite a shock. I had spent most of my working life in New York City. At the time of this move to San Diego, we were living in Kansas

City, Kansas, and I had to leave a great job with Hallmark Cards. As we traveled westward, I felt as if I was leaving part of my identity behind.

On top of that, I faced an immediate decision: Should I try to find a fairly secure job with a large or medium-size company, even though it might limit the time I could spend with our family? Or should I start my own consulting business, which would give me greater flexibility but entail a higher degree of risk?

I decided to start my own consulting business, but there was a problem. I was now living in unfamiliar territory and had absolutely no business contacts. So I called some old business associates in New York City, where I had previously lived and worked. With careful strategic planning and dedicated networking, I was able to secure enough business to get going. After my son was born, I picked up a few more clients in California, and before long I was off and running with my own business.

“A woman I know has been working in the same job for fifteen years,” Sue Baker told me, “and it no longer interests her. She supervises ten people and is making good money, but she’s simply going through the motions. She knows what her passion is: she’d much rather be working outside doing landscape architecture. She talks about her dream

all the time, and then she adds, ‘But I wouldn’t make as much money as I make now.’ Actually, I don’t think it’s a money issue. She and her husband have a financial cushion, so this would be a good time to make a change. Fear is really the issue.”

Sue’s story reminded me of a woman I currently coach. For the past eight years she’s been making a very nice salary, and for the past three years she’s been absolutely miserable. In fact, the misery overflows from her work into her personal life. She wants to become a school counselor, and she’s going to school at night to get her masters. But the next step is an internship, which would mean taking a leave of absence from work. She’s making more than \$100,000 a year, and at most her new position would pay only half of that. She’s a single woman and owns two homes, and she’s unwilling to change her lifestyle. So she continues to be a wishful thinker, personally and professionally.

TAKE CALCULATED RISKS

When I encourage you to take risks, I’m not suggesting that you act irrationally or irresponsibly. For example, before I made a decision to start my

own business, I laid out all of the options. Although I was taking a personal financial risk, Tim's job provided a cushion for our family. Actually, the biggest risk I faced was the pain I would feel if I failed. Moving out on my own took courage, but as I evaluated the risks versus the rewards, the decision wasn't difficult to make.

When you come to a crossroad in your life, do your homework. Listen to other people's opinions and learn from their experiences. But you are a unique individual, so don't take everything you hear as gospel. You are different from other people. Just because other people tell you about a bad experience they had with a certain company or person, that doesn't necessarily mean you will have the same type of experience.

Look for opportunities and be open-minded. Be willing to change companies, departments, geographic locations, or other things in your life when those changes promise to benefit your personal life and your career. Intentionally cultivate a spirit of adventure. Set your sights on what you want and go for it!

At the same time, be willing to turn down opportunities that don't fit your overall goals, even if they are enticing. I had to do that early in my career when I was looking for a job in New York City. During my

search I came across what seemed to be the ideal position. The company was prestigious, the salary was lucrative, my boss-to-be seemed terrific, and a company car was one of the perks. But there was one problem: the company was on Long Island, and I was single and very much wanted to continue living and working in Manhattan. After much soul searching, I declined the job offer and continued looking until I found a position that matched my overall personal and career goals.

At another time in my career I accepted a job transfer from my company's home office in New York City to a regional office, because the opportunity promised to advance my career-development objectives. After two years in the regional office, I returned to the corporate headquarters with field experience that put me ahead of most of my peers.

Sometimes it's strategically wise to accept lateral moves when the new job is a good fit and will increase your potential for future promotions. Many people are so focused on getting to the next higher level in the organization that they overlook options that may seem less prestigious but offer valuable opportunities to increase the breadth and depth of their experience and knowledge.

Earlier in her career Sue Baker took a risk in

order to pursue a long-term opportunity. “I had a good position and a comfortable salary with a large corporation,” she told me, “and a smaller company offered me a lower-level position that paid \$20,000 per year less. I accepted the offer because I thought it would allow me to move into leadership faster. It was a risk that I’ve never regretted. I’m still with that company, and I’m confident that my responsibilities and salary are greater today than they would have been had I not moved.”

Lynne Brookes agrees that it’s important to take risks. “You move forward faster and learn more when you’re out of your comfort zone,” she told me. “Risk-taking may come more naturally to athletic people, because athletics teaches you competitiveness. Athletes are not so afraid of losing. But anyone can learn to take risks. It’s a trait you need to develop and put into practice.”

Difficult times can be beneficial times. What at first appears to be an obstacle may turn out to be a blessing. Make the most of every situation. Keep moving forward with perseverance.

Carol was a top performer in her company. In fact, her boss told her that she was up for a promotion. But suddenly, he left the company. Now Carol found herself reporting directly to her

former boss's boss, who unfortunately didn't know much about her capabilities. It appeared that her promised promotion just walked out the door.

But instead of getting discouraged because she didn't get what she wanted when she wanted it, Carol kept moving forward. Over time she developed a good working relationship with her new boss. When he began interviewing for someone to fill her former boss's position, she threw her hat in the ring and ultimately got the job. In the end, because she persevered, things turned out even better than she had originally hoped or planned. She not only got promoted, she became a vice president!

One of my clients, Teresa, also displayed commendable perseverance in the face of obstacles. When she didn't get the promotion she wanted due to lack of operational experience, she didn't sulk or leave the company. She kept her eyes open for the next opportunity, which turned out to be a lateral transfer that promised to give her the operational expertise she lacked. One year later, bolstered by this added experience, Teresa was promoted into a job that entailed more responsibility than the one she had originally applied for.

Sue Baker told me a similar story about someone she worked with. "A project manager in our company

applied for a director position that he really wanted,” said Sue. “Although he had excellent skills and was highly regarded in the company, he didn’t get the promotion because he had never managed people. Instead of sulking or resigning, he accepted management’s decision. Over the next two years he asked for opportunities that would give him the supervisory experience he lacked. Two years later he was given that director position because he had the necessary leadership qualifications. The company’s management had noticed the mature way he had responded to the initial disappointment, and they rewarded him.”

COMMIT YOURSELF

We all face mountains in life. In fact, mountains are what make life exciting and worthwhile. But the attitudes people have about those mountains differ greatly.

Many people like to talk about the mountain they plan to climb “someday.” They have big ideas and big dreams, but they never pursue them.

Some people choose to ignore the mountain. They’re so afraid of failure that they don’t embrace opportunities.

Others simply complain about the mountain. They'd rather blame others and indulge in self-pity than take responsibility.

Still others choose to take the easiest route and go around the mountain. They spend their lives skirting success instead of attaining it.

And then there are those who climb part way up the mountain and turn around. When they get back to the base, at least they can tell themselves and others that they "tried." They confuse effort with success.

In contrast, winners set their sights on the summit, commit to the climb, and take the necessary actions to reach the peak. They aspire to accomplishment, strive for excellence, welcome challenges, and persevere through trials. Since you're making the effort to read this book, more than likely this last group is where you belong.

Mountain climbing is exhilarating, but it's also hard work. Any climb worth undertaking demands energy and perseverance. Without a high degree of motivation, you won't make it to the top.

Motivation springs from commitment. Before you can successfully climb a mountain, you must *decide* to climb it. To be successful, you must decide to be successful.

You can't put your career development in someone else's hands and simply wait for things to happen. You must create your own opportunities. You must take ownership of your life, because no one else will.

"Getting divorced when I was twenty-three was a wake-up call," admits Sue Baker. "That made me realize we are all pretty much on our own. I graduated from college in August, got married in September, and moved with my new husband to California. Our subsequent divorce was the bubble-bursting moment. The white picket fence no longer existed. Someone taking care of me for the rest of my life no longer existed. I realized that I would have to make the decisions moving forward, and if I didn't take charge of my life, it wouldn't happen."

Are you ready to take charge of your personal and professional life in order to achieve increased success and fulfillment? Do you have a clear vision of what success and fulfillment look like for you? If so, the next step is to develop your plan.