



## *Life-Purpose / Vision*

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**NEW LIFE EXPERIENCES** often are the catalyst for a quest to find a more meaningful life. No matter where you may be today in answering the fundamental questions of “Why am I here?” and “What is my life-purpose?”, the reality is that life-purpose is in constant evolution. The fact is, we should focus more on “creating” our life-purpose instead of “finding” it. Our sense of direction starts with knowing our strengths, our needs and our values. These are the foundations from which we can build our life-purpose.

*“Happiness cannot be pursued; it ensues as the result of living a life of meaning and purpose.”*

—**Viktor Frankl**, *Man’s Search for Meaning*

In Viktor Frankl’s landmark Holocaust testimony *Man’s Search for Meaning*, he shares his view on the meaning of life as being centered around three areas: “a deed we do, or a work that we produce, an experience, such as love, and finally the attitude we take toward an unalterable fate.”

I often ask people I meet for the first time “If there were no limits, what would you do with your life? Would you be doing the work that you are doing today?”. In about 80% of the cases, people say they would rather be doing something else, something that would bring a greater sense of satisfaction to their lives. When I hear this, I reflect back on the work of Frederick Herzberg highlighted in *The Harvard Business Review* which focuses on Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivational factors of employees within the workforce. First are the Extrinsic or Hygiene factors such as status, compensation, job security, and work conditions. They do not increase job satisfaction, but can lead to dissatisfaction if they are missing. Second are the Intrinsic motivators which include challenging work, recognition, responsibility and personal growth. These factors contribute to increasing motivation and lead people to love what they do, even feel excited about going to work every day. When choosing a career path, if your choice revolves around making money as your first priority, you are driven by the Extrinsic or Hygiene factors. Given the many realities we all face around meeting expectations of our family or friends, or driven by our own focus on our job as a sign of our social status, we make choices based on those drivers. But while others look at us with our big title, fancy car and house, and our life built around the salary we have been earning, what they often do not see is our inner challenges with demotivation. The only way to escape this trap or avoid getting into it from the start, is that you have to ask yourself questions about the path you are about to embark on: Is this opportunity going to allow me to do something

that I consider meaningful? Will I love what I do every day? Will I have the chance to grow and evolve? Ultimately, you have to uncover your “why”, as in “Why do you wish to pursue this opportunity?”

## FINDING YOUR “WHY”: IKIGAI

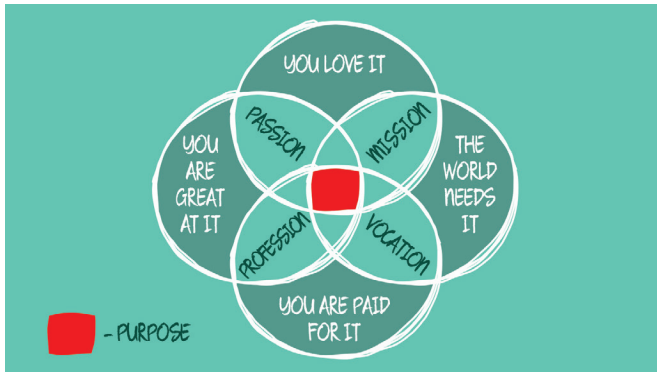
Your why is what truly makes your life worthwhile. Why do you get out of bed every morning? What makes you come alive? In Japan, the word *ikigai* translates simply as, “reason for being”, or the passion that gives meaning to your life.

The graph below depicts the core elements that can help you find your “ikigai”, and it revolves around answering four questions:

1. **What do you Love?** What aspects of your life make you come alive?
2. **What are you Great at?** What unique skills do you have that come most naturally to you? What talents have you cultivated and what do you excel at even when you aren't trying?
3. **What Cause do you believe in?** What breaks your heart and what change would you most love to create in the world?
4. **What do people Value and pay you for?** What service, value or offering do you bring, or could you offer, that has a real value to others? What would people need and would be happy to pay for?

## Vitality

Your ikigai resides at the center of these four circles.



On the path to define your ikigai, or your Life Purpose, we can inspire ourselves from the strategic theory defined by Henry Mintzberg, which states that there are two sources to develop a strategy. The first source is anticipated opportunities that you can evaluate and choose to pursue. This leads to a plan that is based on those identified opportunities and that will lead to your ***Deliberate Strategy***. The second source emerges from unanticipated problems or opportunities that would allow you to develop an ***Emergent Strategy***. As in any corporation developing its strategy, the path leaders choose to pursue today based on their Deliberate Strategy, may require that they rethink their options based on evolving realities in the market that will lead them to a new Emergent Strategy. If you transpose these concepts to your own personal life, you can see how shifting conditions may allow you to reevaluate your life priorities. In fact, as your life evolves, bringing new experiences, new skills emerge and you gain greater clarity on what you are great at and what you truly enjoy the most. Even in my own

career, when I originally signed up to do my Ph.D. in Economics, my Deliberate Strategy was to pursue a career at the World Bank or the IMF, since the Ph.D. was the minimum requirement for the positions I was aspiring to pursue. While doing my Ph.D., I realized that what truly got me up every day, was my business side, given my Bachelor in Finance and International Business. During my Ph.D. years, while most students were teaching assistants, I was the only one taking on consulting mandates with international firms, travelling in Europe and North America, doing what I truly loved. I ultimately integrated in my Ph.D. dissertation concepts and ideas from these experiences. While writing the final 10% of my thesis, an opportunity emerged and I started working full time for an international organization, leading a new business unit they had put in place. I took great joy and pleasure in this role and I faced the reality that “business was in my blood” and that the original path as an economist would not allow me to feel truly fulfilled. My Emergent Strategy became my Deliberate Strategy at that point. Years later, while with the same company, I was so clear on what I truly enjoyed, that I turned down an offer to become a Chief Economist based in Europe. I knew, deep in my heart, that I would miss the business and strategic aspects that I had come to master through the years.

After this experience, over the years, I have embraced many opportunities and have taken new paths to live a more fulfilling and meaningful life. It takes courage to navigate in uncharted waters. It takes courage to ask yourself the right questions on how you define a meaningful life for yourself. But when your “why” becomes

clear, start walking on the right path so you can truly live a life of no regrets.

## **PURPOSE IS ABOUT HARMONY**

As the Dalai Lama said so eloquently, “From the first day of our life until our last breathe, the very foundation of our existence is affection and human warmth.” Purpose isn’t about our career, but rather about how you care and share your life with others. When you let go of all the “shoulds” influenced by society, culture or family, you will discover that your purpose amplifies the flourishing of others, while blossoming yourself, through teaching, transforming, adventuring, creating, learning, sharing, loving, caring, or healing. Your life purpose is who you are when you feel most alive, most useful to others most awake and most appreciated. Having the exact words to describe your purpose is not nearly as important as feeling it burn within you, like a raging fire. As long as you feel your purpose inside, you’ll know whether you’re “on purpose” or “off purpose.” When you feel on purpose, you are in harmony and your feelings (heart), thoughts (head), and actions (hands) are in synchronicity. Over the last months, when have you felt the most alive, excited and enthusiastic about what you were doing? Who were you being at that moment in time? What are the greatest problems you have overcome in your life, and what talents, gifts, and ideas have you developed as a result of that experience?

## **LIVE WITH NO REGRETS**

Every day is a blessing in disguise. Endless possibilities exist for us in terms of the actions we want to pursue,

how we will spend our days, how we will impact others and most importantly, how we can live a life of no regrets. When I speak about regrets, it is not just at the end of a particular day or week, but rather at the end of your life. To put things in perspective, we can be inspired by the insights of Bronnie Ware, author of *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*. She shares, in a very profound way, the five regrets of the dying that emerged from his extensive work in palliative care, tending to people during the last three to twelve weeks of their lives.

1. *I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.*
2. *I wish I didn't work so hard.*
3. *I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.*
4. *I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.*
5. *I wish that I had let myself be happier.*

Reflect on these five points, and define what actions you may wish to pursue now, to avoid having regrets later in life.

## **LIFE MEANING & HEALTH**

A study published in the *Review of General Psychology* has brought forward a link between life meaning and health. The lead author, psychologist Stephanie Hooker, indicates that a meaningful life is “basically the idea that your life makes sense, you’re here for a reason, and you’re significant in the world.” Although we each face various challenges in our lives, of varying complexity, the meaning we give our life puts things into perspective,



and we revert naturally to the “why” behind what we do, in order to increase our coping mechanisms and lower our stress levels. She continues to state that “People who have a greater sense of meaning may be more likely to take care of themselves because they feel as if their lives matter more. They’ve got this ultimate purpose that they’re trying to achieve, and health is the foundation for being able to do that.”

## THE POWER OF GIVING

There is a Chinese saying that reads:

*If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap.*

*If you want happiness for a day, go fishing.*

*If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune.*

*If you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody.*

Do you know that giving activates the same parts of the brain that are stimulated by food and sex? Many studies have shown that altruism is pleasurable and there are so many forms of giving, from giving our time to someone, sharing our wisdom, showing our love, to being compassionate. A Harvard report also looked into numerous studies that demonstrated that “happier people give more and giving makes people happier, such that happiness and giving may operate in a positive feedback loop (with happier people giving more, getting happier, and giving even more)”. Irrespective of age, gender or background, the empirical data strongly supports this: happiness allows us to multiply our acts of kindness and hence, create a happier world.

When we have a balanced approach between what we pursue for ourselves vs. what we can give to others,

it will enrich our lives as well as the lives of others. Let's start with something as simple as a conversation between two people. If you only talk about yourself, and do not seek to learn about or understand the other person, how do you think the other person will feel at the end of your dialogue? No matter how interesting your stories or you may be, the person will not take as much pleasure in the conversation. However, if you intentionally balance the dialogue between asking questions about the other person, and giving them the opportunity to share the positive, negative, funny or sad stories they choose to share, you will both feel a sense of balance and contentment.

### WHY PURPOSE MATTERS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Organisational purpose should describe the impact a company wishes to have on its customers, employees and the world, beyond making money. Purpose needs to be distinguished from the Mission that defines “what is being produced”, and the Vision that paints the “future aspiration”. Why is this important?:

- ❖ **Purpose drives everything**—it will drive all major decisions and it will become the determining factor in how the organisation allocates resources, hires employees, plans for the future and defines success.
- ❖ **Purpose fosters visionary ideas & meaningful innovation**—it provides the motivation and direction necessary to create meaningful innovation within organizations.

- ❖ **Purpose brings energy and vitality to the work at hand**—it provides meaningful and sustainable motivation for employees.
- ❖ **Purpose contributes to a life well lived**—work is no longer a 9-to-5 job to be endured but a meaningful source of fulfillment and satisfaction.

The importance of purpose is integrated now in universities such as Harvard in order to inspire students to redefine their impact on this world. As Bill George said, “At Harvard Business School, we are challenging students to think hard about their **definition of success and what’s important in their lives**. Instead of viewing success as reaching a certain position or achieving a certain net worth, we encourage these future leaders to **see success as making a positive difference in the lives of their colleagues, their organizations, their families and society as a whole.**”

But finding the organizational purpose is the first step, operationalizing it is the second. Below are three key considerations:

- ❖ **Clarity on the individual impact**—Each team and job function should have clarity about how they contribute to the organizational purpose. People should strive to achieve their purpose every single day, in every interaction and with every initiative.
- ❖ **Conditions for success**—The policies, procedures and processes should support your purpose. Where are you in alignment? Where are you out of alignment? Your operation should be helping people achieve your purpose.

- ❖ **Continuous engagement**—Winning the hearts and minds of your team, is the route for winning the hearts and minds of your customers. Embedding your purpose into the fabric of your organization requires constant care. Leaders who tell stories about making a difference to customers, keep their purpose alive in an emotionally engaging way.

The value of finding and operationalizing the organization's purpose is immense on employees, customers, communities, and organizational profits. According to research done by Jim Stengel, who monitored the performance of 50 organizations that had a strong purpose over ten years, below is what he found: "The group of 50 brands outperformed the S&P 500 by about 400 percent in that decade. So then we wanted to know what else these enterprises had in common. That's when we saw it: They all seemed to have something different going on in the culture. You can call it a higher ideal or a higher mission or a higher purpose... These companies communicated all the time about the ideal, inside and outside the companies, in everything they did—their office designs, their emails, their meetings, their advertising and other communications, of course. The companies also thought about the product experience through the lens of the ideal... Yes, they measured share and cash and earnings, but they also measured their progress against the ideal." If you wish to read more about this research, you can read his book *Grow*, or his most recent article where he monitored the performance of the 50 organisations, and he states that 85 to 90 percent of the organisations are still top performers. As Stengel states "Many companies go for decades

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with the same ideal. The real challenge is figuring out how to keep innovating against that. You have to keep telling new stories that convey the ideal. As time goes by, the real criteria for success will be those that can constantly innovate against the ideal.”

# PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

## *On Life Purpose*

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### **FINDING YOUR PURPOSE:**

1. What do you Love to do?

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2. What key qualities/strengths have people told you that you are great at?

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3. In which areas would you like to make a positive impact on this world?

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4. Who would benefit from your actions? How would their life be different as a result of your contributions?

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5. What are your most important values that determine how you live your life?

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*Build your life purpose:*

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TO:



(use answers from question 1, 2, 3)

SO THAT:



(use answers from questions 4 & 5)







# 1

## SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE

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*What seeds are you planting now for your future life, 5, 10, or 20 years from now?*

Your words, your thoughts and your actions today, are like the seeds for your future life.. Your small actions can blossom and lead to some amazing outcomes in all areas of your life from your relationships to your career and your health. The seeds you plant today will only blossom if you nurture them by giving them water, warmth and sunlight. Just think of any plant or tree which takes time to form roots below the ground before they actually bloom. Never force the manifestation of the trees or flowers in your life, just focus on planting the right seeds and nurturing them daily.

**TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** What seeds do you need to start planting now to create your future life?



# 2

## FINDING THE RIGHT BENCHMARK

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When we fall into a habit of comparing ourselves to other people that have more than we do, we can put ourselves into a cycle that leaves us feeling unhappy with our achievements. Comparing yourself to others robs you of joy and satisfaction along with time and energy. Each one of us has a different life history, genetics, family, resources, environment, and all of this has shaped us very differently. Comparing ourselves with others is like comparing apples with oranges. We can all choose where to focus our attention and what benchmarks we use for ourselves.

**TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Use yourself as your benchmark, and think about one achievement or an area you have grown in during the last year. This comparison to yourself is very empowering because it is within your control to improve yourself and create the person you want to become.





# 3

## COMPLAINT FREE DAY

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*“If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude. Don’t complain.”*

—MAYA ANGELOU

Repeated complaining rewires your brain to make future complaining more likely. Over time, you find it’s easier to be negative than to be positive, regardless of what’s happening around you. People who complain on a consistent basis are inclined to have poor health, as well as less satisfying professional and personal lives. So, why do we do it? Most people don’t realize how often they complain because it has become a habit. People also complain because they want validation for their beliefs. By complaining, people dwell on the negative and definitely reinforce what they don’t want, creating a negative mood for themselves and those around them. Complaining also keeps people from taking action and it provides excuses to procrastinate.

**TODAY’S CHALLENGE:** When you catch yourself wanting to complain find the positive intention behind it and ask yourself, “What do I really want?”. Be very clear about what you do want, not what you don’t want, and think about “What actions can I take – now?”.





# 4

## THE GOODNESS WITHIN ALL OF US

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Generosity is a key element of emotional health and abundance. Being generous and kind encourages us to perceive others in a more positive light fostering a sense of community and a feeling of interconnectedness. Being generous also makes us feel better about ourselves. Have you ever had one of those days where the generosity and attention from others simply reminded you that there is a lot of goodness in this world? From the story of the stranger that helped you fix your flat tire, to the waiter in a restaurant that brought you a drink on the house, your child choosing to give his/her chocolate bar to another crying child nearby in the park, the surprise hotel upgrade you got on your last trip, or when a stranger in line pays for your lunch as you realize you forgot your wallet. Share a beautiful story of generosity that you experienced or heard of from friends or family to inspire us to see the goodness we all hold in our hearts.

**TODAYS CHALLENGE:** Share a beautiful story of generosity that you experienced or heard of from friends or family to inspire us to see the goodness we all hold in our hearts.



