

Well-behaved women rarely make history.

ANITA BORG

If you want the impossible done, give it to a woman on fire.

VICKIE L. MILAZZO



FIRE

Ignite Your Inner Fire to Live Passionately

Women are born passionate. We love hard. We cry hard. When we care about something passionately we can change the world.

Forget Madonna and Lady Gaga. The real heroines lived in times when strong women were not in vogue. French military leader Joan of Arc, American temperance reformer Carrie Nation, abolitionist Harriett Tubman and women's rights activist Margaret Sanger changed the world because their passions drove them to stand strong for what they believed. All passionately talented women—women like you.

Life is not about having or not having passion. All women have it inside. Either you honor that passion in your life or you don't.

Often we fear passion. We fear it won't stick, so we avoid it altogether. We fear that, like a lover, passion will "betray us"; but it's our passion that drives us to wicked success day after day after day.

Passion is not just one dream job, one perfect relationship, one child. Passion is a way of living every moment to its fullest.

Every woman has the potential to dig deeper, to find the way to her passion and to live with fire. This won't make your life easier, but it will certainly make it richer.

When I was growing up in a modest shotgun house in New Orleans, nothing about my childhood suggested I was destined to travel, but that didn't stop me from becoming a world traveler in any way I possibly could. I travelled through the eyes of beautiful glossy brochures to many countries. I wrote to the consulates of every country I could think of for free information, and when I opened our mailbox, the adventures began. Through the most amazing photos in those glossy publications, I walked the Great Wall of China, trekked the Himalayas and tracked lions, wildebeest and elephants on the Serengeti. Each imaginary trip I took on paper was vivid and exciting.

Years later, when I became a nurse, there was little money or time for travel. But I found ways to indulge that passion. I attended one or two nursing conferences a year, choosing destinations that beckoned. I also traveled during my two-week vacation, no matter how tight my budget. These modest experiences made the passion inside me burn deeper, and when I turned my passion for legal nurse consulting into an education company, I included travel as part of my vision.

Over a period of several years I traveled to 48 states teaching one-day seminars on legal nurse consulting. While enjoying the endless beauty, bounty and diversity of the United States, I probably ate in every Applebee's in the country—twice. Those seminars and the associated travel allowed me to create and cement my brand while seeing places I would have never visited otherwise. In cities large and small Tom and I enjoyed museums, local culture, festivals—garlic, crawfish, Italian and just about every other festival you could imagine.

My passion for travel has since expanded to more remote places. I have sipped yak butter tea with monks in the Himalayas, eaten sheep's brains with Berbers in Morocco, enjoyed the kava ceremony on a private island in Fiji, rice wine with a Hmong tribesman in the highlands of Vietnam and drained a gourd of grassy maté with gauchos on a Patagonian estancia. But I did draw the line at a fresh bowl of cow's blood with my Samburu host in Kenya.

Because I dug deep into my passion for travel I consciously created a life that embraces travel. Life is too short not to spend it on what you're passionate about.

PASSION FANS THE FLAME OF WICKED SUCCESS

Without the fire that only passion arouses, success eludes us. If you're not passionate about an idea, why would you do what it takes to carry it out? Pursuing that idea would be way too hard without passion.

To excel at rock climbing, you have to push through the pain and discomfort of scraped hands and aching muscles, and to do that you must have fervent passion for the sport. Find that same passion in your job and you'll be far more successful than a woman who isn't on fire.

We all know people who exist in passionless and purposeless lives like cardboard cutouts. Is that really living?

I'd rather live a life of passion than one of passivity, even if that passion may not reap extravagant financial reward. Money will not get you out of bed in the morning. While it does help to have money once you're up and moving, you still need an underlying passion for what you do and where you put your energies.

To live passionately is to act. If you're true to yourself, you'll put energy behind your passions and take the necessary actions to bring them to fulfillment. You'll make time for the fire that burns inside you.

I started my first business at the age of 8. There were no revenues and the only profit from teaching my imaginary classes was passion. Today, work for me is still passionate play. But now I teach real classes to real people for real profit.

What if you're not sure what your passion is? Does that mean you'll never find it? No, because passion is not just one thing, not just a career, a cause or a relationship. Passion is a way of approaching and enjoying life to the fullest. The gain is the passion itself, not a prize of victory, more money or more friends, although such rewards will likely follow.

Passions derive from values and beliefs. If you value excellence, you might be like Carol, the education director who is just as passionate about creating the perfect policy and procedure manual as she is about meticulously planning a conference for hundreds. Valuing a healthy body can fire you up for a daily 5:00 a.m. workout that another woman would consider insanity.

I love Broadway theater, and when I go to a musical or play I'm always amazed at the ability of the actors to perform the same show night after night after night, yet never make you feel that it's just another

day at work. On Wednesdays and Saturdays they do two shows. During the matinee, the actors know they have to do it all over again in six hours. They can't go on cruise control to reserve their energy. They have to give it their all, as though this is the only performance they're ever going to give.

They go deep and pull up the passion they have for acting and the passion they have for their audience, to make that performance look like it's a first.

That is what successful women do. Whatever their game, they give it their all and make it look like it's the first time, like each person or project is the first, the one and only. That's the path to wicked success.

Passions change and evolve. At any moment passion is a choice. What you're passionate about is a choice.

A woman can be passionate about anything (although my husband often reminds me that straightening the magazines on the rack and folding a perfect hospital corner on our bed are compulsions, not passions). My friend Yvonne, passionately immersed in her career, had a child she hadn't planned for and now she's equally passionate about raising, teaching and loving that child. She manages both career and child with focused passion.

Passions are lived out in as many expressions as there are women. Yours are inside you, and they will reveal themselves if you listen carefully.

LET YOUR PASSIONS MOVE YOU

We all know there's no one magic formula for prosperity and happiness, but there is one common denominator I've found among wickedly successful women: They have a passionate drive to do what they do. They're on fire.

Some inner spark in the mind, spirit and soul burns intensely, driving them over seemingly insurmountable barriers. Passionate women don't do what they do just because they can—they do it because they're irresistibly compelled. This is wicked success. This is happiness—being on fire. Not how much money you have in your bank account. Not how many school activities you participate in. Not how thin you are. Not being retired at age 55.

Alicia Alonso, the Cuban ballerina, is recognized as one of the finest classical ballerinas of all time. Her achievement is all the more impressive because Alicia is one woman we probably should never have heard of. Her soul was fired up to dance, but her body wasn't cooperating.

At 19, when she was not yet a famous dancer, Alicia was diagnosed with a detached retina. Her condition required three successive operations and left her with partial sight but no peripheral vision. After surgery Alicia was instructed to lie in bed, perfectly still, for a year. But Alicia's flame would not be extinguished by mere physical limitation. During her year of enforced bed rest she danced in her mind and with her toes to keep her feet, memory and passion alive. She taught herself to dance *Giselle*, a difficult ballet that demands the ballerina's full range.

When Alicia returned to the stage, every prop and light was placed exactly the same for every performance, so that she could memorize her moves and dance even with her limited vision. The deadly peril of the orchestra pit awaited her slightest misstep or memory lapse. Still, Alicia Alonso achieved world renown and was honored with the highest designation a ballerina can earn, *Prima Ballerina Assoluta*.

Was it only talent that made her one of the world's most successful ballerinas? Or was it her driving passion to do what she loved despite overwhelming odds?

Jean wanted to start her own business. I realized I couldn't determine what was driving her, so being the direct person I am, I went straight for the jugular and asked, "Why do you want to start a business?" Equally blunt, she said, "I want money to buy nice things, a nice car, nice clothes and a nice house."

Payoff is essential for entrepreneurship, but the missing ingredient I saw in Jean was fire for the business itself, not just the rewards of the business.

Contrast Jean's approach with Lauren's. Her business model is actually more difficult, requiring investors, a large front-end capital outlay and a commercial lease. Knowing how the economic recession tested my own passion and stamina for my business, I predict Lauren is more likely to succeed. Why? Because, unlike Jean who is money-driven, Lauren is driven not just by the passion of wanting to own her business, but also by the passion of the business itself. Her passions will move her during the good times, the bad times and all of the times in between.

Without the inner fire that only passion arouses, success—and I mean long-term, authentic success—will elude you. Money can never be the only long-term driver. Passion and purpose for the work need to be the fuel of your desire and your actions. You succeed not because you want the monetary rewards, but because you need to succeed for your very soul.

Here's an interesting fact: Studies have shown that money does make people happier—but only to a certain point. Once your basic needs and a little bit more are met, your happiness seeks new avenues. Despite what you've seen on television, a Mercedes, a boat or a closet filled with Armani won't make or keep you happy. (Okay, maybe my own private jet would make me happier.) What will make you happy consistently is having experiences full of passion and purpose. In fact, studies also show that experiences produce longer-lasting "highs" than does the act of buying stuff. By experiences, I'm not just talking about vacations and birthday parties; experiences also include the work you do.

Here's to Lauren and all the passion, purpose and success she will enjoy during her lifetime. Here's to all of us living lives and careers filled with passion and purpose. Live and work your passion and you'll never "work" a day in your life.

DISCOVER YOUR FIRE TO LIVE PASSIONATELY

What you're passionate about is a choice, and every choice you make is a choice for or against passion. What's your passion? What really makes you feel alive? What percentage of your life does passion represent? How does your passion fit into your business or career or relationships? If you can answer these questions, you're well on your way to living passionately.

But what if you're not sure? If your passions have not yet got you leaping into action, use the following exercises to coax them to life.

And please, write in this book. This book is not for you to just read. Use it to think and write your way to wicked success.

- 1. Connect with your early interests.** Much of what I was passionate about as a child is a big part of my life now. It didn't happen instantly, but I ultimately reconnected with those childhood passions

and incorporated them into my adult life. Can you recall a pleasant childhood memory of playing? What comes to mind first? *Write it down, no matter how absurd.*

Thinking about this play scenario, ask yourself: Did you love it? Were you good at it? Did you engage in it every chance you could, without being pushed? Did your parents have to drag you away from it? *Now, describe it in detail.*

Perhaps your memory comes from your teen years or early adulthood. Or it might be the first time you recognized a special talent, developed a latent skill or derived pure pleasure from an accomplishment. Recall even one time when you felt passionately excited and no one had to push you into action, then you'll know how to ignite your passion for success. Write down *something*, even if you aren't quite certain, or it seems outrageous.

- 2. Acknowledge your current interests.** Imagine you have all the money you need and nine months to do anything and everything you want to do—pursue any career or hobby, live in a new state or country, sing with your favorite band or climb Mount Everest. You're free of worry about financial or practical matters during that entire time. What would you do?

Grab a pen and take three minutes to stretch your imagination. Write down everything that comes to mind. Don't limit your answers to the obvious, such as traveling or spending more time with family

and friends. *Write fast, as many things as you can think of. When your three minutes are up, stop.*

Glance quickly over your list. You'll notice that a few items give you a profound feeling of excitement, urgency or possibly, disappointment. *Circle three that ignite a spark.*

Next, considering your everyday world as it exists right now, take two minutes to list everything you might want to accomplish in the next year. After two minutes, stop. Circle three items that spark passion inside you.

- 3. Go inside, listen and choose your actions.** Women tend to pile on the responsibilities. We already do more than twice the housework and more than three times the childcare as the men in our lives. Why buy into the myth that we must handle it all—home, children, career, care of an aging parent, social obligations, financial wizardry—and still have energy for great sex? Listen to your inner voice and you know that myth is ridiculous. Yes, we probably can handle it all—we're women, we can do anything—but why should we? Men would never expect to juggle so many responsibilities.

Martha, has been cooking breakfast and dinner her entire married life. When her husband retired, he wanted her to make lunch, too. At first she hopped in and did it. But soon it grated on her that his retirement meant she had more work to do. She's at retirement age too, and preparing another meal was contrary to her passion for enjoying life. She decided it was time to retrain him, and that's exactly what she did when she told him, "Our wedding vows included better or worse but not lunch. You're on your own for lunch."

How many everyday responsibilities in your life can be eliminated? Or delegated? Or hired out? Or automated? Which responsibilities no longer support you? Let them go. Eliminating just one or two items from your busy schedule frees up time to pursue your passionate interests. *Write down two responsibilities you will no longer handle personally.*

- 4. Keep listening and quickly reject whatever you're not passionate about.** We all go through stages where our energy comes from a particular source, and once that source no longer provides a driving vitality, it's okay to let it go and ignite a new fire.

There was a time when I loved to entertain. I was passionate about cooking and loved having friends over to eat. Then one day I was just as happy eating out, choosing to relax with my friends without the bother of planning, shopping, cooking and kitchen duty.

At first I felt guilty about not being the entertainer. I was still passionate about cooking; I'd just lost my passion for entertaining. A Saturday morning spent in the kitchen chopping, grinding, blending, cooking, imagining and creating will do almost as much good for my soul as a massage or walk in the woods. The epiphany struck—I don't have to be passionate about entertaining anymore.

While that fire burned inside me, I did it, I loved it. Then other passions took over and I moved on. When a passion burns out, let it go.

If your burning passions are not yet evident, rejecting everything you clearly are not passionate about can help you get closer. Try backing into your passions with the following exercise.

Look at what you absolutely don't want to do. "I don't want to do this, or this. . . ." *Write down five things you absolutely don't want to do.*

Then write down five things you might not mind doing. “Maybe I would like to do this . . . or this.”

Eventually you’ll hit on something that speaks to you: “Yes, I could really enjoy doing this.” Is that a passion? Maybe, maybe not. Only by exploring it will you know. *For now, write it down.*

Be patient. If you don’t get a fire in the belly that feels like real passion, keep exploring. Maybe for now it’s only a spark. The flame has to start somewhere.

- 5. Foresee the reality of your passions.** Frequently we crave a result without foreseeing the full implications of that result. Fame brings intense responsibility and an end to privacy. Breaking a record opens the door to all contenders.

Alice wanted to be a keynote speaker until she saw the lifestyle that keynoting represented—living out of a suitcase, sleeping in hotels away from home and loved ones. By speaking locally, with only occasional trips out of town, she was able to modify that passion without forsaking it.

Suzi dreamed of opening a bed-and-breakfast and playing host to new guests every day. Soon after opening, she found that her time was spent cleaning, cooking, washing dishes, invoicing and answering the reservation line. That reality wasn’t what she signed up for, so she changed it by hiring a manager and staff. Now she enjoys her dream of entertaining guests, without toilet duty.

Joan was a talented actress but was only marginally successful at it. She appeared on Broadway in the leading role of Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*. She played different roles on TV shows such as *Friends*. But one day she woke up and decided she could no longer accept the reality of living on \$700 one week and \$30 the next. She still loved acting, but recognized she would never make a significant living at it. She moved on to another profession and embraced it with the same fire as she did acting.

I love to travel. I travel 20 weeks a year for business and pleasure. The benefit—I've seen a small chunk of the world and loved most minutes of it. The realities: Cavity searches at the airport, inedible airline food (when you can get food), 12-hour flights, lost luggage and seats so unfriendly to my body parts that I'm ready to abandon them in the seat pocket in front of me. I miss a few parties and weddings, too. Knowing these realities, I can steel myself in preparation. I always have my smartphone, to stay connected. I always have plenty to read or do. I always take food in my carry-on. Can I live with the realities to live this passion? Yes.

Whether you want children, want to be married to the love of your life, want to start your own business, want to quit your job or do all of these, answer these questions: *What benefit will you gain by living your passions? What are the realities of that lifestyle? Does this passion support your other life goals? If not, how can you modify or merge them?*

THE PASSIONATE PATH ISN'T QUICK AND EASY

After I started my business, I went to law school at night, but decided I preferred the freedom and flexibility of owning my own business. After I graduated, a group of attorneys I consulted with offered me a position as an associate attorney. Saying no was easy. I graciously and easily declined, thinking, “Why would I want to do that? I’m doing

what I love, having more freedom and making more money than any new associate attorney.”

A year later a partner at the law firm approached me and said, “Okay, if you won’t come on as an associate, we’re inviting you to be a partner.” This attractive offer was unprecedented and raised the stakes considerably. The offer was more financially lucrative than I thought my business could be. Suddenly, saying yes to my passion wasn’t so easy. I loved consulting with these attorneys, and if I was to practice law with anyone, these were the guys! Plus, a partnership would guarantee a bigger and brighter future every year, financially and in other respects.

After my ego stopped dancing around the room, pumping its arm and shouting “Yes!,” I stopped and listened to the promises I’d made to myself. Promise 1: “I will live and work a passionate life.” Practicing law was not my passion, even with such ideal conditions. My passion was teaching.

I needed to trust my passion. Trust I did, and I declined the offer. Eventually, this decision paid off big, both financially and emotionally. My passion was so strong that I surpassed the law firm’s offer in every way while maintaining my freedom, creating my own financial security and, most of all, enjoying the career I’m passionate about.

That kind of decision isn’t easy. What’s easy is to compromise, say yes to a lukewarm interest because we think, or someone else thinks, it’s a smarter decision. Live and work your passions and the reward will come, maybe not always financially, but in a way that matters to you.

I had the opportunity both to interview and be interviewed by Daryn Kagan, who at the time was a news anchor for CNN. Daryn knew at age 16 she wanted to be a television reporter. After five years at a local TV station, she asked to move up to anchor. Repeatedly, her boss passed her over to hire blondes. “There’s just this ‘it,’” he told her, “and some people have it and some don’t. Clearly, you don’t.”

That was harsh, but Daryn refused to let her boss define her direction, her passion or her success. She circumvented his limiting beliefs and forged her own path. She convinced him to put her on as weekend morning sportscaster, a position she invented, and for over a year she worked that job for free. Daryn, who had a passion for sports, saw an opportunity to get noticed at a much higher level in a field where women were not the norm. Later, when a position opened up at CNN, she got it and after only three years became an anchor.

Sometimes the smartest move is to move on, especially when the here-and-now doesn't support your passion. Had Daryn believed her first boss's assessment of her future in television she might never have achieved anchor status. Don't let others define you, your passion or your direction. When Daryn's passion was tested, she paid her dues, then moved on, following her own path and reaching the outcome she desired.

THE PASSIONATE PATH ISN'T BALANCED

The passionate path doesn't always involve a life of balance. Balance is a myth perpetuated by self-proclaimed self-help experts. This myth has women feeling inadequate and lousy about ourselves, because we get exhausted trying to balance it all.

That's why it's important to choose a career or business you're passionate about. When I first started my business while working a full-time job, my life was out of balance, but I was loving every moment of it.

Surround your workday with people and experiences you enjoy, so when you fall in bed after a 16-hour day you still feel fired up from having fun. Don't buy in to the myth of balance. Instead, find balance within a passionate life.

Despite the fact that many of us fantasize about never having to work, it's the women who accomplish something big while under loads of stress who actually live longer. These are women with passion and purpose. I was excited to read that finding, because balance would bore me. Passion is what I live for.

PASSION DOESN'T BURN THE SAME FOR ALL WOMEN

Not everyone feels and expresses passion in the same way. Being Italian, I tend toward the active, fire-in-the-belly, excited way of seeing and doing things. My husband says I'm like a summer storm. I blow in, there's thunder, lightning, wind and rain, then I blow out.

My Vietnamese housekeeper, Thi Thu, is the calmest person in the world. She moves almost silently around my home and appears unflappable no matter the situation. Where her passion sparks is when we're in the kitchen. She's passionate about cooking and especially passionate about telling me how to cook. Whatever the preparation, the dish or the plate we put it on, she has a passionate opinion and expresses it freely.

She arranges shrimp on a plate around a sculptured mound of seasoned rice with all their tails pointing just so. Her salads are mosaic perfections, every vegetable cut precisely and layered in bands of color. When I make a salad, I chop it up any old way I can and toss it all together. It's food. Clean it, chop it, eat it. Her dishes are works of art. Mine are works of sustenance. Anyone can tell by the results that she loves preparing meals, but watching her go about it with such amazing calm you'd never recognize her passion.

It's okay if your passion burns differently. What's important is that the fire burns bright for you.

10 STRATEGIES FOR LIVING PASSIONATELY

In March 1982, when I had the privilege of seeing Alicia Alonso dance, she was 61 years old. I had no doubt that her passionate drive accounted for her long, successful career. That same month I started my business. This woman and her unflagging energy have inspired me ever since.

We are measured not by how we deal with victory and accomplishment, but by how we deal with failure and disappointment. When life gets tough, I remember Alicia and other passionate women like her whose blazing fire wouldn't be stifled.

10 Ways to Live Passionately

1. **Commit to the fire.** We live in an increasingly passive society, where we can sit and watch the news, play video games, text, communicate via Facebook, Tweet, or Skype or play FarmVille and believe we're involved, when all we're doing is idling in place while life passes us by. We're not doing much, yet it seems we're doing a lot.

Passivity is dangerous to passion, because passion never resides in a passive house. A passionate woman doesn't sit in front of her computer waiting for the world to approach her. She's alert and moving. When a scintillating opportunity appears, she seizes it on the spot.

2. **Practice being fiery.** If you're thinking, "I'm not naturally passionate," don't despair. You can practice passion as easily as you can practice any sport.

I'm not a sports fan, unless I'm playing, but one night Tom dragged me to an ice hockey game "kicking and screaming." Within minutes I was into it. I didn't know the rules, didn't understand what was happening down on that ice, but I was beating on the glass, yelling at the players, the goalies, the referees and having the time of my life. I was practicing passion—at least, that's what I told Tom.

Approach your day and your life with positive energy. Nothing destroys passion quicker than negative energy. "I'm passionate about music, but I hate my day job" is not the energy that will propel you to succeed in that day job until you can quit to pursue your passion for music. It's okay to know you're in a temporary way station, but be happy in your way station. Find at least one aspect of your job to be passionate about. No experience is a waste; it's training for what comes next.

Anytime you feel you're not living passionately, you have two options: You can make the most of the experience, or you can make yourself miserable. Let's face it, we can't skip the parts of life we don't enjoy, and few of us can enjoy every single moment.

Susan runs five miles a day, even in rain or sleet and when I mistakenly mentioned that she loves to run, she quickly corrected me: "I don't love running, I love the benefits of running." Even though I know Susan well, I had no idea she didn't love running.

Practice passion in every situation and make everything you do your passion training ground.

- 3. Get fired up about the right stuff.** You have this amazing strength of fire, but how are you using it for your life? Are you fired up about the right things—the things that will advance your life and career? I hear you—all fired up about your favorite TV show, a bad relationship, a rude person in the grocery store. *News flash:* CSI is gonna solve that crime, whether you're watching or not. Ten years from now you're going to have trouble remembering the name of the guy who broke your heart, and the rude person in the grocery store isn't thinking about you. Why not put some of that fire into you and see how your life changes?
- 4. Do something, even if it's wrong.** Ninety percent of success is showing up. Whether you're selling an idea, trying to land a new job or learning to paint, the bottom line is that you have to show up.

Many people are afraid to commit to a passion because they expect a firecracker to go off, a light to shine or a voice from the heavens to proclaim, “This is it!” Maybe that firecracker will pop, maybe not.

And what you’re passionate about today may arouse no interest tomorrow. New passions emerge and you evolve. Yet, even when you recognize that your passion today might not be your passion tomorrow, that it’s okay to move on, committing to one path as opposed to another is often difficult. Do something anyway, even if it’s wrong.

- 5. Ignite your own fire.** Only you can define your passion. My dad is 87 years old. Sal has had two heart attacks and two bypass surgeries and has outlived two wives. Based on statistical probability he’s pretty much “out of warranty,” but keeps going and going and going because he has a reason for waking up every morning. My dad’s passionate about playing poker at a local casino, to the point that I have to call him at specific times each day or miss him entirely. He’s not a big gambler; he rarely wins or loses more than \$30, and usually ends the week even. You and I might shake our heads at such a passion, but it keeps him young and feisty.

Wicked success is spelled in many ways. For one woman it’s millions in the bank. For another it’s the luxury of spending more time with family. It’s your success; spell it the way you want. Don’t seek or wait for approval, and don’t be disappointed if others (even those closest to you) don’t get your passion.

Too often we buy into other people’s definition of what’s right or wrong, how we should or shouldn’t proceed. If you’re waiting for approval or for someone else to ignite your fire, stop being so well-behaved.

My motto is, “I do it my way—you got a problem with that?” That motto helps me to live my fire, not everyone else’s. My way doesn’t always work, but at the end of the day, I’m comfortable failing if I know I followed my own passion. This is your life, your passion, no one else’s.

Don’t just break rules, make your own rules. A woman in my company is practically combustible. She’s been setting fires all over our office since her first day, accepting the responsibilities of her job

while constantly making new rules and brilliantly gaining acceptance for them. After completely rewriting her job description, she became passionately involved in every aspect of the company. What new rule would you have to make to light your own fire?

- 6. Ignite your fire with a spark.** Women often think their passion is not worthy, that it should be bigger, bolder, more important. You don't have to start with a blaze.

My business started with a spark, not a blaze. My goal was modest: to pay the mortgage on my 1,100-square-foot condo without having to work overtime. I didn't envision the multimillion-dollar company I've since created. After fanning that spark for three years, I hit my first \$100,000-year and thought I'd won the lottery. If someone had predicted that I'd one day have a \$16-million year, I would have said, "That's not possible."

Sparks ignite fires. Only you can decide which spark is worthy of your time and energy, but a small passion that drives you is better than no passion at all. Anita Roddick, who took The Body Shop from a passionate idea to more than 2,500 stores worldwide, says, "If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito."

Small sparks give us confidence to light bolder fires. What spark could you ignite now, today? Fuel one small spark, and soon you will be rewarded with the blazing fire of bold passion.

- 7. Translate your passions into written goals.** In the business world it's common knowledge that what gets measured gets done. A Harvard Business School study revealed that only 3 percent of the population has written goals; 14 percent have goals, just not written down; and 83 percent have no clearly defined goals. The study further revealed that the 3 percent with written goals earned 10 times more than the others. If you've written yours down, when was the last time you reviewed them?

As I often remind my husband, having a map or directions isn't helpful if you don't refer to them. Goals are a guide, not an endpoint, but the power of written goals is indisputable. Only after writing a goal down can you sincerely examine it and define the strategies to make it happen.

- 8. Create time and opportunity for your passions.** In a busy, demanding schedule, it's easy to believe we have no time for passions, and believing makes it so. Conversely, if we fiercely believe in the promises we make to ourselves, we'll carve out time to pursue our passions.

Many authors rise an hour early to finish writing a book. Many successful career women use their lunch hours to study, place important phone calls or otherwise make progress in pursuing their passions. Entrepreneurial homemakers stay up to pursue their venture long after the family has gone to bed.

If you love to travel but the economy has you down, promise yourself that you'll travel once a year then twice a year after that. Make that goal your priority. Daily lattes and working on your Manolo shoe collection may need to be bridled and controlled.

Are you passionate about what you spend 60 to 80 percent of your time doing? If so, you'll undoubtedly succeed. If not, change that ratio.

- 9. Align your relationships with your passions.** It's not uncommon for a woman's passion to conflict with important relationships. This is true whether the relationship is with your supervisor, your best friend or your significant other. Will you change your vision to hold on to the relationship, or change the relationship to hold on to your passion?

An important success trait is the ability to detach from people who aren't on course with you. It doesn't mean that everyone you know and love has to agree totally with your choices. But don't waste time with people who only want to diminish you.

I have a friend who put her career on hold after she married and had children. She stayed at home until the oldest was 4 years old, when she began doing volunteer work to get out of the house. That wasn't enough, so she took a full-time job, which required her to travel. She was making more money than her husband, even after four years off the market. Her in-laws, who believe a woman's only function is homemaker, bombarded her husband with their negative opinions. Emotionally torn, he wanted to support his wife, but was conditioned by loyalty to his parents' ideals. Naturally, his wife also felt conflicted, eager to pursue her vision but emotionally invested in her husband and family.

I encouraged her to go with her vision, because it's her life. Too many women give up career dreams to protect a relationship. That's traditional, but it can drive you into a mental institution. And some dreams, if you don't pursue them timely, will pass you by. When you're finally free, you've missed the window of opportunity. To her husband's credit, he went along because he valued the relationship as much as she did.

Conversely, a former student, whose husband felt threatened by her earning more money than he did, dissolved her successful consulting business and gave up her six-figure income. To avoid conflict in her relationship, she renounced her passion. How crazy is that? Maybe she should have renounced her husband's limited thinking and surrounded herself instead with people who believed in her.

A relationship must be mutually beneficial, and any genuine relationship will adjust to change. When you recognize that someone is extinguishing your fire, ask yourself whether you should gracefully detach and move on. Open a communication path. Share how much your vision means to you, and the people in your life may surprise you.

The game of life is challenging enough when players support one another. Life is more fun when the people on your team are truly aligned with you and your passions.

- 10. Keep the passion alive by stoking the fire.** Not everyone can switch passions so easily. For example, you invest years in education, gaining experience and advancing in your profession. Switching to a totally different profession means starting from ground level, reinvesting your resources in an unproven venture and climbing a different ladder to a different future. That's fine if you truly yearn to start over and your passion drives you in that new direction. Many people's passions burn brighter when they make sweeping changes.

I've invested 29 years building my company. I started as a consultant working out of my home. To grow my business I hired one employee, then another and today I have 23. Always passionate about business, I'm not always passionate about employees; and while I love my work and my company, I don't love every aspect of it. Do you ever feel this way about your life, your job, your career or significant other?

Stop and reevaluate. If you're like me, maybe you're not experiencing the dreaded "burnout," but only a need to stoke your fire.

Do what you do, but find a different focus. Or do what you do differently. My best growth ideas come when I toss out the old embers and stir things up.

Writing this book stoked my fire. Is there a spark or ember you can stoke to a blaze? What aspect of your passion have you not fully explored? What new opportunities are available to you today? Passion is precious. Don't let the mundane routines that surface in any pursuit dampen your fire. Look within and find a spark you can fan to full flame again.

<http://www.pbookshop.com>

IGNITE YOUR FIRE WITH THE

5 PROMISES

PROMISE 1

I Will Live and Work a Passionate Life

Write down at least one passion from the earlier exercises. Do it, even if it's only a spark.

How do your passions relate to what you do now? Calculate the time you spend each day living and working your passions. If it's less than 75 percent, how can you increase that time?

PROMISE 2

I Will Go for It or Reject It Outright

What holds you back from living your passions? Is it physical, mental, emotional or financial? Is it driven by adverse responsibilities or relationships? How can you eliminate or minimize the obstacles?

PROMISE 3

I Will Take One Action Step a Day Toward My Passionate Vision

What one action will you take today toward living your passions?

PROMISE 4

I Commit to Being a Success Student for Life

What do you need to know to pursue your passions? How can you obtain this knowledge? When will you commit to learning it?

PROMISE 5

I Believe as a Woman I Really Can Do Anything

Recall a passion that fired you up, however briefly. List three principles you can take from that to your next, bolder passion.

» DOWNLOAD THE 5 PROMISES FOR FIRE AT **WickedSuccess.com**.

EVIE'S FIRE

Certain things that I'm on fire about push me forward, especially at work. Ever since I was young, I have always been passionate about making a person feel happy or pleased. In my first job, working as a cashier, this passion transcended into building good relationships with customers. Subsequently I was promoted to supervisor. Then I was promoted again, to a "cash clerk." I'm the last person who needs to be counting money, but my managers translated my passionate behavior to mean that I would probably do anything in that company well. Through passion for being a good employee, and lots of recounting, I got through it.

Today, my passion is still customer service, and I have written and spoken professionally about the subject. Although my education is in marketing, I mentor and work directly with customers. I also train and coordinate customer service for a high-energy company, mentoring customer service representatives to be as passionate about our customers as I am. No matter where you are in life, you have to be on fire about at least one aspect of your job to really make a difference and stand out. Passion is the one thing that gets me ahead. I'm still working on my college degree, but I've had no problem surpassing people who already have a college degree, by making more money and holding higher positions. It doesn't

*make me more or less smart. My passion fuels my fire.
I guess that says a lot about passion.*

Evie, 35
CUSTOMER RELATIONS COORDINATOR
AND MARKETING CREATIVE

Women are born passionate and have the potential to live life passionately. Dig deep, discover the fire in your soul, then read on to see how intuitive vision can broaden your realm of possibilities.

Before I go out on the stage, I must place a motor in my soul. When that begins to work, my legs and arms and my whole body will move independently of my own will. But if I do not . . . put the motor in my soul I cannot dance.

ISADORA DUNCAN

<http://www.thesuccessshop.com>