

MARC GRASSO

∞ THE GREAT 8

Life Design

THIS WORKBOOK BELONGS TO:

Introduction

It's time for what matters most: invest in yourself, find your right balance and energy and get started on your best and most meaningful year yet!

Having difficulties setting your priorities? Balancing your professional and personal life can be challenging, but it's essential. Often, work takes precedence over everything else in our lives. Our desire to succeed professionally can push us to set aside our own well-being. Creating a harmonious work-life integration is critical, though, to improve not only our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being, but it's also important to be successful at work. I found out that the structures we use in a successful business, to take control and drive value, can easily be applied in our personal life, as well. And that these can be converted into 8 simple steps, THE GREAT 8. If you can apply these in your personal life you will be able to find the right balance, energy, and fulfilment in life. It will also help you to focus on what matters most. I experienced this myself, and I would like to share it with you.

MY BACKGROUND

In the past twenty years, I have been working for multiple international

companies. Every 3-4 years, I moved up the career ladder; having the opportunity in my mid-thirties to be part of management boards leading billion EUR companies. I always had a strong passion for transformation with a meaningful impact on business as well as on people.

I have spent many hours at business schools, such as INSEAD, and have read all kinds of management books and articles on how to create impact on my business. As Chief Financial Officer, I learned how simple structures will help to provide direction within the company, such as its purpose, vision, strategy, goals, and management agendas. When you start integrating these into a continuous cycle that involves planning, monitoring, and reviewing it will enable alignment, accountability, and growth. If you are able to combine the structure with setting the right environment, the company will flourish.

Although I was able to create a lot of value for the companies I worked for, I wasn't able to create 'personal value', such as self-fulfilment. Especially in my early career, I found it difficult to set my own priorities and say 'no' to all kinds of requests. I was trying to do more each day, working 10 to 12 hours and feeling exhausted

at the end. I found it difficult to fully engage with my family and friends in the evenings or during the weekends, making me feel guilty. I slept poorly, had little exercise and had very little time for myself. I wasn't able to find the right balance, energy, purpose or fulfilment in life.

LIFE CHANGING

It was twelve years ago when I read an article: *'Everybody dies but not everybody lives!'* by Max Bickford; it made me realize that I needed to take control of my personal life, just as I had been doing in business. The article outlined a striking metaphor. It defined graveyards as the richest places on earth because of all the unfulfilled dreams that are buried there. A place of all the 'could haves, would haves and should haves'. The message was clear: instead of being afraid of failure or success: be afraid of not achieving your fullest potential. I began to realize, that in my 'busy-ness' at work and the routines of my life, time was flying by all too fast; before I knew it, I would be looking back on my life with some big regrets. It made me ask myself: When I look back on my life, how do I want others to remember me? What difference did I make in their lives? What are my biggest achievements? Did I have the courage to

live a life true to myself and not worry about what others think?

TRANSFORMATION

What if I were to use all of these tools I've learned for successful business transformation and apply them to my own personal transformation? Not only companies, but also individuals have a purpose and a vision of their future. Once you have defined both for yourself, they will be powerful guidelines for setting your priorities and will be fixed points on which you focus all your time and energy.

To keep you going it's important to invest in yourself; to maintain the right balance and energy – it will serve your purpose. The great thing is that you can renew your energy by establishing simple habits. You will learn that it will take you about 30 days to build a new habit, and it will take you about 90 days to build a new lifestyle.

And finally, to get you started, there are some great project management tools you can use in your personal life that I learned when I was a so-called 'Lean Six Sigma Black Belt' project manager at Philips. Such as 'the week and day start board' – to boost your productivity and to get



'As in business, simple structures will give you some direction – such as your purpose, ambitions and goals in life; inspiration and motivation will get you started and habits will keep you going' – Marc Grasso

you focused on what matters most. For example, during the Covid-19 crisis I was asked by The Dutch Ministry of Health (VWS) to help set up a National Consortium for the procurement and distribution of personal protection articles for all

healthcare professionals, when hospitals and care institutions were not able to obtain any more masks or other protection. Within two weeks, we were able to set up an entirely new organization fully operational, with 150 people who had never

worked with each other before, supplying over 2 Billion EUR of articles across the country. The only tool we used was the 'week and day start board' for all communication and priority setting.

THE GREAT 8

It took me some time to figure out that all the management books I had read, all the classes I took, and all the effective structures and tools that I had been using in business, could also be used in my personal life. I converted them into 8 simple steps which I call THE GREAT 8.

I want to emphasize that I'm certainly not a guru. I've just tried to put all the inspiration that's out there into a simple structure. Following these 8 simple steps year after year made me take more and more control over my personal life and helped me find the right balance in the different roles I have. And even more importantly: they brought me more energy, purpose and fulfilment in life.

Twelve years back, when I started using this methodology for the first time together with my wife, we set our very first goal: to live abroad for some time. This was because we both grew up as expat kids and had great memories of that period of

our lives. We had the dream of working and living abroad together with our four daughters. Six months later, the company I worked for offered me a job opportunity in Dubai; eleven months after that we moved to the Middle East. I discovered that by imagining what we wanted and setting our goals to it, doors had opened.

My personal transformation journey motivated me to help other people. About ten years ago, I started to put my belief and my passion for transformation that has a meaningful impact on business and people, into practice. Next to my job as CFO, I started to roll out THE GREAT 8 program to all our employees. And later also to other companies. The positive reactions to my program and how it impacted their personal lives, inspired me to write this book about THE GREAT 8. Each chapter is devoted to one of the eight steps, including an exercise that will get you closer towards *your best and most meaningful year yet!*

And remember: these are not rules, just guidance. It's up to you how to use these guidelines – it's a personal journey, it's your destination, you are in control and you decide how to get there.

STEP 1
Define Your Purpose

Everyone
has a purpose;
do you know
yours?

∞ THE
GREAT 8

Purpose of existing

An inspiring best-seller to help find your WHY is 'The Big Five For Life' by John P. Strelecky. He calls the WHY 'your purpose of existing', which he believes everyone has and which is connected with your 5 most important life goals, your 'Big Five For Life'. Strelecky's book has sold more than six million copies worldwide and has been translated into 42 languages. He really inspired me to think about my purpose of existing on a personal and business level.

Just like companies, people also have a personal purpose for existing, he says. If those two purposes fit, you get happy and motivated employees. That is good for them and for the company, because employees who are happy and inspired will book better results. Strelecky also believes that the company has a responsibility to support their employees to achieve their purpose of existing and their 'Big Five for Life'. 'Companies are not just in the business of business - they are in the business of life'.

I have noticed that it really works this way. As Chief Financial Officer of the company - although I'm responsible for value creation - I have never set goals for sales or profits, it just

happened to be the outcome, the result of our WHY and what we aim to achieve. If we focus on our purpose and the related goals, profits will follow automatically. The outcome for the company is value, for the employee's happiness and development.

I also believe as a leader of a company that it is important to help our employees to find their own purpose of existing and understand how it can support the purpose of our company. Once we defined our WHY, our purpose, I found it much easier to set our goals: the WHAT. It also empowers my team to execute, as they will use these goals to set priorities and make decisions within their field over expertise on HOW to get there. My only role is to make them successful and enable them to live according to their WHY.

‘To inspire people to do what inspires them, so that, together, each of us can change our world for the better’

- SIMON SINEK

EXERCISE



Finding your WHY is the first step in working on your best and most meaningful year yet because it helps you to define the goals you want to

achieve. This is definitely easier said than done. To help you to answer this question you could first try to answer the following three questions:



- What are your top 5 most important personal values? - You can use the examples on page 14 and 15 or define others of course;

- What would you like to learn in this life, what are you hoping to gain?

- What are you bringing? - Think about your talents and what they can mean to others.



STEP 1: Describe in one or two sentences your purpose of existing.

EXAMPLES OF WHY'S

Simon Sinek: 'To inspire people to do what inspires them, so that, together, each of us can change our world for the better'

Tony Robbins: 'Live life while I'm here. Experience everything. Take care of my family, my friends and

myself. Have fun, be crazy, be weird. Go out and screw up! I'm going to anyway, so I may as well enjoy the process. Take the opportunity to learn from my mistakes; find the cause of my problems and eliminate it. Don't try to be perfect; just be an excellent example of being human.'

COACHING TIPS



- When formulating your WHY, try to start with a verb, keep it simple and clear, make it infinite if possible and do not spend more than 10 minutes on this first step. Note that this is just a guidance, there is no set length or style, it can be also a few words, a poem, a picture, or even a song, as long as it feels right and inspires you.

- Let other people's purposes inspire you. Steal like an artist, as Austin Kleon's book is called. You don't have to invent the wheel yourself, it's fine

to copy the purpose of someone else and adjust it to your situation. Choose what appeals to you and don't think about it too long, it's not set in stone. You can always adjust your purpose at any time, it's an ongoing process. I was inspired by the purpose of John Strelecky and I've refined my purpose a few times in the past 12 years, because I learn new things and get inspired by others along the way. Finally, I came up with this one:

'To experience all that I want from life, so I live with no regrets and capture different experiences, cultures & nature. Be a good example for my 4 daughters, caring husband and inspire, energize, & empower others to make a difference with a meaningful impact.'

• If you haven't been able to put anything on paper yet, just try to write down a few words that feel right to you. Look back on your life, try to look within, discover the things that you are passionate about, and pursue

them, regardless of other people's doubts or the setbacks you might meet. The questions below might help you. Try to find the keywords in the most important results. Combine these keywords in one or two sentences.



• What can you do to make other people's lives better?

• What activities made you forget about the passage of time?

• What is your happiest memory from childhood?

• What advice would you give to your younger self?

• What things are you willing to do even if you look like a fool?

• If you were given the chance to teach others (e.g., young people), what would you teach them?

• What's usually the reason why people thank you?

• Ask friends and family for input. For example, if you want to know what you can bring into this world, ask them what your talents are? They know best. Lots of times it is things that you take for granted,

that you didn't think was a talent or anything special. Maybe they tell you that you are a good listener and you give great advice. If this is something that gives you joy, maybe you can use it in your purpose.

• To get to the inner circle of your beliefs and values, you can use the 'Lean Six Sigma methodology': the 5 x WHY. This method is simple and very effective, it helps you get to the bottom line. Toyota used it to get to the root cause of a problem. You can use this method in various ways. Just keep on asking yourself 'WHY?' If your first answer is: 'I like to help people', ask yourself: WHY do I like to help people? Keep doing this five times after each answer and you will

get to your deepest beliefs and values. • Don't write down what others expect from you; a lack of awareness about your own needs can leave you with a false sense of purpose, one that is actually based on other people's expectations. Don't get caught up working harder and harder at climbing the ladder of 'others expectations', only to discover, upon reaching the top, that the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall.

OTHER INSPIRATION



You can find a lot of other inspiration on this topic, especially by watching TED Talks, like the one from Simon Sinek. Watching these on YouTube can inspire and motivate you to start working on your own purpose. Here are some of my other favourite TED Talks:

- **Jill Bolte Taylor: My stroke of insight**
- **Sir Ken Robinson: Do schools kill creativity?**
- **Angela Lee Duckworth: Grit: The power of passion and perseverance**
- **Tim Urban: Inside the mind of a master procrastinator**

‘Inspiration is what gets you started, habit is what keeps you going’

STEP 7: Define 5 habits that you intend to keep or start to manage your energy.

Habit 1 _____

Habit 2 _____

Habit 3 _____

Habit 4 _____

Habit 5 _____

