

The Reading List

Twelve books on work, purpose and building a career — and what each one is actually for.

Books worth your time on work, purpose and building a career. Grouped by the problem they solve. Read one per month, not all at once.

If you don't know what you want

Designing Your Life — Bill Burnett & Dave Evans

Prototyping beats planning. The exercises are the point — do them, don't skim them.

Range — David Epstein

Permission to have been unfocused. Generalists compound later, and that's fine.

What Color Is Your Parachute? — Richard Bolles

Dated in places, still the best inventory of self-assessment exercises in one book.

If you know what you want and can't get in

So Good They Can't Ignore You — Cal Newport

Skills first, passion second. The antidote to 'follow your dream'.

Never Eat Alone — Keith Ferrazzi

Networking as generosity with a system behind it. Skim the anecdotes, keep the method.

The Startup of You — Reid Hoffman & Ben Casnocha

Treat the first five years as a portfolio of small bets.

If you've started and want to be good

The First 90 Days — Michael Watkins

Written for executives, works perfectly for a first job. Steal the 30/60/90 structure.

Radical Candor — Kim Scott

How to give and survive feedback without taking it personally.

Deep Work — Cal Newport

The competitive advantage nobody your age is using.

If you're questioning the whole thing

Bullshit Jobs — David Graeber

Uncomfortable and worth it. Ask whether the role you want produces anything.

Four Thousand Weeks — Oliver Burkeman

On finite time and giving up on doing everything.

Man's Search for Meaning — Viktor Frankl

Not a career book. Fixes the question behind the career question.

How to read these usefully. One book, one action. After each, write a single sentence:
“Because of this I will ___ by ___.” A book that doesn't change a behaviour was entertainment.