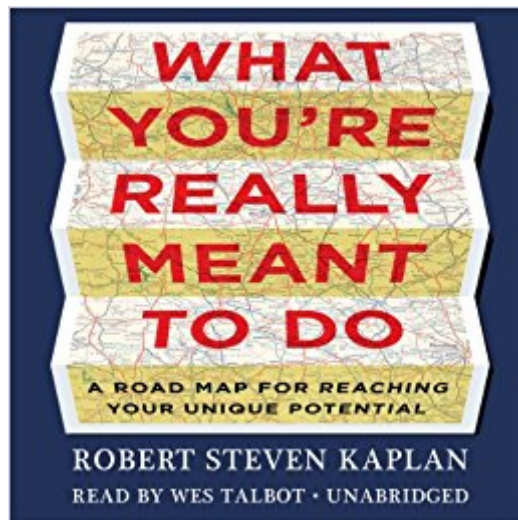


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# What You're Really Meant To Do: A Road Map For Reaching Your Unique Potential



## Synopsis

[Read by Wes Talbot]Are you doing what you're really meant to do? If you're ready to face this question, this book can help you change your life. -- How do you create your own definition of success -- and reach your unique potential? Building a fulfilling life and career can be a daunting challenge. It takes courage and hard work. Too often, we charge down a path leading to "success" as defined by those around us and, ultimately, are left feeling dissatisfied. -- Each of us is unique and brings distinctive skills and qualities to any situation. So why is it that most of us fail to spend sufficient time learning to understand ourselves and creating our own definition of success? The truth is, it can seem so natural and so much easier to just do what everyone else is doing -- for now -- leaving it for later to develop our best selves and figure out our own unique path. Is there a road map that will enable you to defy conventional wisdom, resist peer pressure, and carve out a path that fits your unique skills and passions? -- Harvard Business School's Robert Steven Kaplan, leadership expert and author of the highly successful book *What to Ask the Person in the Mirror*, regularly advises executives and students on how to tackle these questions. In this indispensable new book, Kaplan shares a specific and actionable approach to defining your own success and reaching your potential. Drawing on his years of experience, Kaplan proposes an integrated plan for identifying and achieving your goals. He outlines specific steps and exercises to help you understand yourself more deeply, take control of your career, and build your capabilities in a way that fits your passions and aspirations.

## Book Information

Audio CD: 1 pages

Publisher: Gildan Media, LLC and AudioGO; Unabridged edition (February 1, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1469027437

ISBN-13: 978-1469027432

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 1 x 5.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 69 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,289,893 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #107 in [Books > Books on CD > Business > Investing](#) #208 in [Books > Books on CD > Business > Career](#) #358 in [Books > Books on CD > Business > Management](#)

## Customer Reviews

As seen on Fox Business, CNBC, Lou Dobbs, and MSNBC's Morning Joe. This book opens the mind of the reader to a lot of self-exploratory questions rather than offering blind advice. It helps you understand yourself deeply and build a foundation based on this before starting a journey towards your dreams. Business World magazine; compelling and personal and contains individual exercises that provide interesting insights readers likely haven't considered before; whether how to manage your career or a complete career change. If you have ever asked yourself, in any work situation, at any stage of your career, 'Why doesn't someone just tell me what to do?' this book is a worthwhile trip for you. CIO Digest ADVANCE PRAISE for What You're Really Meant to Do: Rosabeth Moss Kanter, professor, Harvard Business School; author, Confidence and SuperCorp; What You're Really Meant to Do is a wise, deeply personal, and always practical book by a leader of leaders. It is essential reading for all those who want to define success their own way. Paul Farmer, MD, PhD, professor, Harvard Medical School; co-founder, Partners In Health; As I have seen him do in classrooms in Haiti and at Harvard, Rob Kaplan provides a powerful and pragmatic prescription in What You're Really Meant to Do. Building on his widely praised work on leadership and efficacy, Kaplan offers compelling narratives of those he has coached and counseled; from executives to entrepreneurs to recent graduates; as a guide for anyone pursuing a purposeful professional life. Henry M. Paulson, Jr., seventy-fourth secretary of the US Department of the Treasury; Chairman and CEO, Goldman Sachs (1999-2006); Rob Kaplan has spent years mentoring and coaching executives and young professionals, and there is no one any better. This book is a superb guide for helping people understand themselves and reach their unique potential. Bill George, professor, Harvard Business School; author, Authentic Leadership and True North; Rob Kaplan's brilliant new book inspires you to reach your full potential by taking responsibility for your development as a leader and as a human being. If you follow his thoughtful, pragmatic approach, you will live an even more satisfying life. Filled with real-world examples, Kaplan helps you build your road map to fulfillment. Vanessa Kirsch, founder and Managing Director, New Profit Inc.; Forging a fulfilling career can be one of the most difficult challenges we face. What You're Really Meant to Do provides a compelling road map for discovering your passions and unlocking your full potential. A must-read for anyone looking for professional growth and fulfillment. -- This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Robert Steven Kaplan is Senior Associate Dean and the Martin Marshall Professor of Management Practice in Business Administration at Harvard Business School. He is also cochairman of the Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation, a global venture philanthropy firm, as well as chairman and a founding partner of Indaba Capital Management, LLC. Before joining Harvard in 2005, Kaplan was vice chairman of the Goldman Sachs Group.

If you read career books, many are written by folks in career counseling and advising. What is unique about this book is that the author's perspective has been shaped by business and academic experiences. The author, Robert Kaplan, ran global businesses for two decades, ultimately becoming the executive chairman of Goldman Sachs. These experiences in working with, and mentoring, individuals in business in various stages of their careers, prompted Kaplan to think deeply about human potential, development and leadership. He left Goldman Sachs to teach in the M.B.A. program at Harvard, teaching a course on Authentic Leadership based on Medtronic CEO'S book TRUE NORTH. All of us yearn for success. The thesis of this book is that you won't feel satisfyingly successful without working to reach your unique potential. The good news about potential is that it is unlimited. Kaplan says you never get to the end of your potential as there are always ideas to explore, things to learn and skills to improve. Kaplan encounters a mix of folks in his executive MBA classes at Harvard and discovers many have great credentials and are achieving monetary success but are dissatisfied. What are they missing? Some older executives and professionals are feeling regret and bitterness concerning their career choice. He also encounters many individuals who are making less money, perhaps, but working in a field they are passionate about, using the skills they enjoy most using, and are happier than the folks who have pursued wealth or status at the cost of doing something in a field they loved. It's difficult to be truly successful in the long term if you don't have some sense of passion for what you do, Kaplan suggests. This book offers exercises in self-discovery to understand yourself better and to identify what you want. Its eight chapters are grouped under umbrella topics: 1) what you're really meant to do 2) know thyself 3) make the most of opportunities and 4) the extra mile. At the end of each chapter are suggested follow-up steps regarding taking action. There is a lot of wise advice in this book regarding attitudes and behaviors from someone who has been successful in business, mentored others and thought deeply about developing potential. For example, he discusses how to deal with setbacks in a career. Engaging examples of individuals he has encountered in his executive M.B.A. classes at Harvard who are sorting out career issues are integrated throughout the book and enrich the principles in the book. Kaplan gives examples of folks who are thinking of leaving their job or

career because of a current obstacle. By asking probing questions and coaching, Kaplan demonstrates that often these individuals still love their field and company, but just need to deal with the obstacle. To be successful, Kaplan suggests you ask yourself: what are the top three tasks you must do extremely well to succeed in your job? And then spend 70% of your time and focus on those three tasks. Another searching question Kaplan poses: What stands in the way of you spending time on the activities you enjoy? Is there an action you could take that would remove one or more of these impediments? As to whether this book would be helpful to entrepreneurs, it could. Kaplan gives examples of some of the entrepreneurs, or folks who worked for entrepreneurs, whom he has encountered: a chef who owned three restaurants in Rhode Island and was thinking of adding more but was unhappy, a retailer who co-owned a successful business in California but was thinking of leaving it due to conflict with her business partner, a student who chose to work for a small philanthropy organization instead of going into the financial services field like her classmates, and an individual who started his own money management firm. The questions in this book will give aspiring entrepreneurs some self-assessments as to what they really want to do. (Also recommend the book: *Startup Leadership: How Savvy Entrepreneurs Turn Their Ideas Into Successful Enterprises* by Derek Lidow who started iSuppli Company and sold it for multi-millions. Lidow teaches Entrepreneurship at Princeton. If you want a look at entrepreneurship to see if you would enjoy its rigors, his book is helpful.) Kaplan's central message is we should worry less about being a success and more about reaching - and developing - our potential as this is where happiness lies. He says there are many paths to accomplish this, and we should pick a path which suits us. This book has some ideas on how to do this.

*What You're Really Meant to Do* by Robert Steven Kaplan is a personal and professional development book hinged on the fact that you have a unique potential. And not only do you have a unique potential, but the only way you can be truly successful is by accepting and acting upon your uniqueness. Which, in my opinion, is an eloquent way to say go follow your dreams, kid. Only that might be hard and you probably are not a kid anymore. Kaplan acknowledges this and is upfront about the difficulty in not only figuring out what you want to do but also that what you want to do may not be feasible (at least for the moment). Sprinkled throughout this book are various exercises the reader should complete. The exercises are creative and should be completed to get the most out of this book. Some are short and some are long. Some are fun while others make you contemplate how many years of your life you have pissed away. Which is still fun, right? Kaplan takes a unique angle on development relative to other books on the market. It approaches situations

and provides advice from a career perspective, which is fitting because the majority of Kaplan's personal experiences shared within the book relate to business. They are concrete and implementable; though not comprehensive relative to other development books I have read. If you're looking for a book to transform your life then I would suggest supplementing this book with another selection more focused on personal development (think *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey). But if you want to learn from a guy who has spent a lot of time with a lot of successful people and are particularly interested in furthering your career, then I would recommend picking up your copy today.

There is a plethora of books about how to reach one's potential in personal and business life. The name of this book looks very mundane so that I have mistakenly categorised it as leisure reading. I must confess this book has offered me many profound, practical, and valuable insights into having a better understanding of myself and finding passion for my career path. Through an array of exercises filled with self-introspection and reflection, Professor Kaplan guides readers to create a sustainable path to personal growth and fulfillment. The key premise of the book is that self-understanding is of paramount importance when we aspire to match opportunities with our passions for fulfillment. We can go astray if we do not understand our strengths and weaknesses. Worse still, we always lament that fulfillment of our passion is subordinate to our constrained economic power and other practical considerations. In this book, Professor Kaplan maintains that the powerful impact of passion on career success is more effective than plotting out a career path on the basis of making money. In Chapter 4, there is a self-narrative exercise that helps readers to demystify themselves (emotions, perceptions, idiosyncrasies, assumptions, vulnerabilities, and mindset) through their personal histories. Given that matching attracting opportunities with our passion is a marathon instead of a sprint that requires us to become focus and dedicated to our jobs in time of adversity and prosperity, Professor Kaplan also remind us the importance of upward communication, constant update of work skills, right leadership with value and ethical boundaries, and trustful relationships with people to bring work performance from good to great. The self-disclosure, inquiry, and advice-seeking exercise in Chapter 7 (P.174) can help us to build our relationship muscles. We are either starry-eyed or cynical about what we want to fulfill in our career path. This book provides a reality check of helping readers tackle the various issues and questions relating to self-awareness, passion identification, and grab-the-opportunity skills. I like this book because issues and questions in every chapter of the book motivate me to build my perspective and reflection of who I am and what I can do for my remaining career path. This

200-page book is no dull with lots of living illustrations for self-introspection and reflection.

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