

# Where Now & How?

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*Twelve experiments to help you fix on and pursue a bright new North Star.*

Bill Magill  
Of The Interprize Group  
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## Forward

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You stand at an inflection point in life. Perhaps it's the end of a core career or start of an empty nest. Maybe the unexpected conclusion of a marriage or an unforeseen financial lift. Whatever the reason, the journey ahead is suddenly open, uncharted, and full of possibilities.

So, ... where now, and how?

At the debut of 2023 I set myself a task: to write a series of 12 experiments for readers facing major life inflections and intent on making the year ahead a pivot toward grand (dare we say audacious!), unexplored ambitions of deep personal meaning. The pursuit of exciting life defining legacies. To that end, these experiments would help draw maps, uncover truths, build plans, fuel motivation, strengthen resilience, and be a lot of fun.

All of the topics and tools of these experiments have been touched on in essays I've been writing since 2011 and are part of the Life Leap Workshops we run in Provence (more about those [here](#)). But they've never been organized into a convenient manual, so to speak, and so now they are.

The 12 experiments were published monthly in [my Substack](#) through 2023 and links to those original essays are provided. Note that if you would rather listen to the experiments than read them, the Substack uploads have embedded audio. Some minor edits have been made in the course of compiling the series, but the audio recordings remain mostly consistent with the final versions offered here.

This manual is offered without charge. That is not a reflection of its value. Simply, I will not charge to help people live deeper, more meaningful lives. Especially knowing that your gift, once developed, will enrich us all a thousand times over. In return for using the manual I would greatly appreciate 2 things, however:

1. Criticisms or suggestions on how it can be improved.
2. Examples of how it has been helpful in imagining and pursuing your next life leap.

These and any other thoughts can be emailed to me directly at [bill@interprizegroup.com](mailto:bill@interprizegroup.com). I always love hearing from fellow entrepreneurs.

## The Wheel of Life

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Published originally on January 1, 2023.

An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

“It is not enough to be busy. So are the ants. The question is: What are we busy about?”

- Henry David Thoreau

Each new year starts with our best intentions. Less of this, more of that. Back to basics, forward to the unexplored. Revived projects and new ambitions. Reinvention.

You may be sketching out plans now. They may get realized, maybe not, perhaps not even launched. One thing is assured: nothing deserved of your very limited time and energy – which are infinitely more precious than money – will magically self-organize. If you want to do something purposeful and grand this year, if that’s a resolution, then you need to organize a plan, even if futile.

Start with your foundation.

### The Wheel of Life

It’s been over a decade since I left the cable cars and golden gates of San Francisco for the lavender fields of Provence. For 30 plus years I had been living the dream in the Bay Area’s tech and investment industries, as a laser jock and analyst and banker and venture capitalist, and I absolutely loved it until I didn’t. When that unsettling mid-life question – *is this it?* – began to itch in places I couldn’t scratch it was time dig deeper, beyond the surface stuff like money and security and title and possessions, and seek out genuine authenticity.





*Girl Before a Mirror*, Pablo Picasso

San Francisco State University had an executive ed program on life coaching back then and the night courses opened up a whole new universe of questions for me. Are you happy? Does happiness matter? Who is in control of your life? What are your core nonnegotiable values? What is your personality type and why is that valuable to understand? Most importantly, what tools are handy to disassemble and reflect on considerations such as these, and to help ferret out some answers?

On the first night of the first class we were introduced to the Wheel of Life. It provides a graphical segmentation of how your finite stores of time and energy and attention are being parsed. You can fill one out for your current situation and another to represent the ideal life. Comparing the 2 is particularly insightful in understanding how truly offtrack your life has become (perhaps not at all, but then again...), and where adjustments should be concentrated; that is, assuming you want a life most closely aligned with your core priorities and interests. (You do.) By the end of this first class I was feeling feverish and plotting *Life of Bill v2.0* on the MUNI streetcar ride home. Within 12 months I was living in Provence.

The Wheel of Life is a circle segmented into 10 slices that collectively represent how your time and energy is being consumed; at least with the 10 most pressing elements. The following chart is an example, but your elements might be different. Some slices are

common to most people: Health and Friends/Family, for example. Other slices may be critical to you, not so much to others. Step 1 to using the wheel involves identifying your 10 most critical life components. Take time to get them right, then run the experiment.



The Wheel of Life

### The Wheel of Life Experiment:

Step 1: Sketch your ideal life.

1. On a sheet of paper sketch a Wheel of Life similar to the diagram above: a circle segmented with 10 equal slices.
2. Create a list of the 10 most defining components of your ideal life; those activities when combined would consume most all of your time, energy, attention, and other resources. It's critical to get the right components, so take time here to think this through. (Your favorite café or wine bar might be an inspiring workspace for this exercise.) In your ideal life you are in control, but that doesn't mean you won't have obligations. Include major commitment that you may not particularly enjoy but that are inescapable (caring for an aging in-law could be an example). It's also the

moment to consider what is and is not truly inescapable. (This can lead you into dangerous territory. Go with it for this experiment.)

3. For each of the 10 elements, assign a weight as to the attention it would consume in your ideal life on a scale of 1 (very low attention) to 10 (very high attention).
4. Assign each element to a slice. Write the 1-10 weighting under each element label, and fill in the slice with a crayon or marker reflecting that weighting starting at the center. An allocation of 10 will fill the slice entirely. An allocation of 1 will barely fill it at all.
5. Look at your chart. Are these the 10 critical components to include? Are they weighted honestly? Come back to the chart later in the day and then again tomorrow, and each time check for honesty and correctness. Don't consider the ideal wheel finished until you've had a chance to review it over a couple of days, at different times of the day, in different moods.

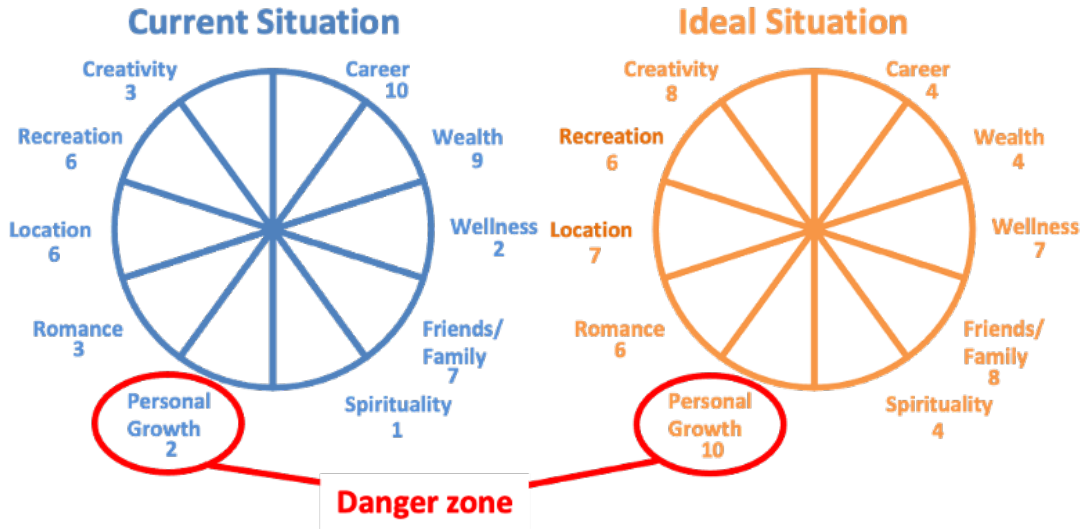
#### Step 2: Sketch your life now.

1. On a second sheet of paper sketch a Wheel of Life that reflects your life now.
2. You must use the same 10 elements as included in your ideal life wheel.
3. For each of the elements assign a weight to the attention it consumes in your life today, from 1 to 10.
4. Fill in the wheel to reflect this weighting, as in number 4 above.
5. Review the chart a few times over a couple of days to be comfortable with its completion.

#### Step 3: Compare the 2 life wheels.

1. Place your 2 wheels next to each other and contrast the profiles.
2. For twin slices within 1 point of difference, bravo, your current and ideal situations are well aligned. Keep it up.
3. For twin slices between 2-3 points of each other consider what can be done to move your current situation closer to the ideal. Small tweaks may work wonders in lowering the weighting tension. Experiments that we'll be running in future essays this year should be helpful.
4. For twin slices that are 4 points or more apart, danger ahead. The tension between your ideal life and current situation may cause serious complications in the future (emotional, physical, relational); they may already be giving you an itch that can't be scratched. Some things in life are out of our control (I argue that this list is smaller than most believe), but seeing your misalignments visually is valuable should they provoke an effort to ease the friction. (At a minimum, toast yourself for soldiering through the inescapable.)

The following chart could have been my Wheel of Life experiment 15 years ago (with the slices colored in). Some misalignments created alarm, then determination, then action. What will yours incite?



There are numerous readings online about the Wheel of Life. [This one](#) from MindTools is particularly good, should you be interested in further study.



## Your Eulogy, First Draft

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Published originally on February 1, 2023.

An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

“Damn it all, plunked in.”

- Inscribed on his tombstone of Andy Loy, a colorful character from Bill's youth.

I need to start this essay by highlighting the good fortune we all have, those of us in a position to think about passion pursuits and life purpose. Close to a billion people on this planet are too damn hungry to think about self-actualization. Double that number when including conflict and war zones. *Where do I find my next meal and how do I keep my children alive?* There are a few Ukrainian families here in Aix – mostly moms and their kids – trying scrape together some way of paying rent while avoiding bad news from the front. What would the hungry and harassed give to be at the peak of Maslow's pyramid? So, with much humility and respect, onward.

### Eulogies

The January Experiment dealt with the Wheel of Life. It's a helpful tool to examine how well your current life aligns with the ideal life you imagine. For February we fast forward the reel and talk about, .... death. I don't mean to be darkly provocative. After the final pulse, there will be a day for others to cast warm light on your life. Your eulogy, the Cliff Notes version of greatest hits; if you die tomorrow will it recount the legacy you want to leave? What does this say about the life you're living now?

*She started a soup kitchen that fed 100s of homeless and hopeless a day.*

*His films made viewers rethink the black experience in America.*

*They restored by hand an old, dilapidated French farmhouse into a world-class BnB.*

You *will* have a eulogy, a moment for friends and family to have a final say on your final day. Maybe even an obit! If there's one thing we all agree on: no one gets out alive. The question then is, do you want some influence over said commemoration? Specifically, do you care about how you will be memorialized by those at the pulpit for them in the pews?



Artist Unknown

The only option for that input is the legacy of material you leave behind. How you lived your life, whom you touched, and what you created: that's what will be so fondly recalled, not necessarily the same how's, who's, and what's you hoped for. Others – family and close friends – will be climbing the sanctuary to sing your praises. They'll want to spin some magic. So give them your magic. Make their job fun.

This experiment, then, is a valuable tool for considering purpose, potential, and progress (gotta love the 3 ps). Why you're here, why you want to be here, why you mattered. And we all want to have mattered.

How is your eulogy lining up? Here's a quick, back-of-the-envelope experiment for a quick gauge.

### **The My Eulogy Experiment:**

Step 1: Your ideal eulogy.

1. Calmed with a warm cup of tea (or chilled glass of rosé) imagine the contented end. Slipping peacefully into eternal slumber, your purpose has been realized, deepest passions fed, your legacy secured. Yes, that WAS a life lived richly, with little left on the plate. And you're confident that those things that mattered most will be



mentioned at your funeral as a true reflection of who you were, how you served, and why a glass raised in your honor is well earned. (If you practice mindfulness this step is a perfect meditation for that zen state.)

2. On a piece of paper list 10 highlights that most merit mention. This is your ideal life list, so include endeavors and achievements from the past for which you are proud and ambitions for the future to which you are committed. Rank them from 1 (essential and non-negotiable) to 10 (important but less critical).
3. Look at the list. Are these truly the 10 highlights to include? Are they authentic and possible (your memorializers will sympathizers, not fabricators)? Ranked properly? Come back to the list later in the day and then again tomorrow, and each time check for correctness. As with the Wheel of Life, don't consider the ideal eulogy highlights finished until you've had a chance to review them over a couple of days, at different times of the day, in different moods.

#### Step 2: Your current eulogy.

1. In a similarly calm state take a second piece of paper. Rank the high points of your life to-date most likely to be mentioned should you die tomorrow, from 1 (almost surely) to 10 (possibly).
2. Review the list a few times over a couple of days to make sure you're not forgetting something and have a proper ranking.

#### Step 3: Compare the lists.

1. For highlights that are on both lists and at similar levels, bravo, your attention and energy are being directed appropriately to those things most important for your life legacy.
2. For highlights on both lists but at notably different rankings, what can you do now to start a correction?
3. For highlights included on your ideal list but missing from current, what's the plan to get something launched? (That's our specialty at the Interprize Group, you should ping us!).



Hachirô Kanno

The toughest part of this experiment will be coming up with your list. At first you may think that 10 things about you don't need to be mentioned, and then you may feel that 10 isn't nearly enough. Grand passions and life purpose and big achievements are all amazing to pursue, to have on our final resumé. But in the end we just want our lives to have mattered. Helpful grandmother, acclaimed author, much-loved kindergarten teacher, national champion, .... How did you matter?





## Mission Definition

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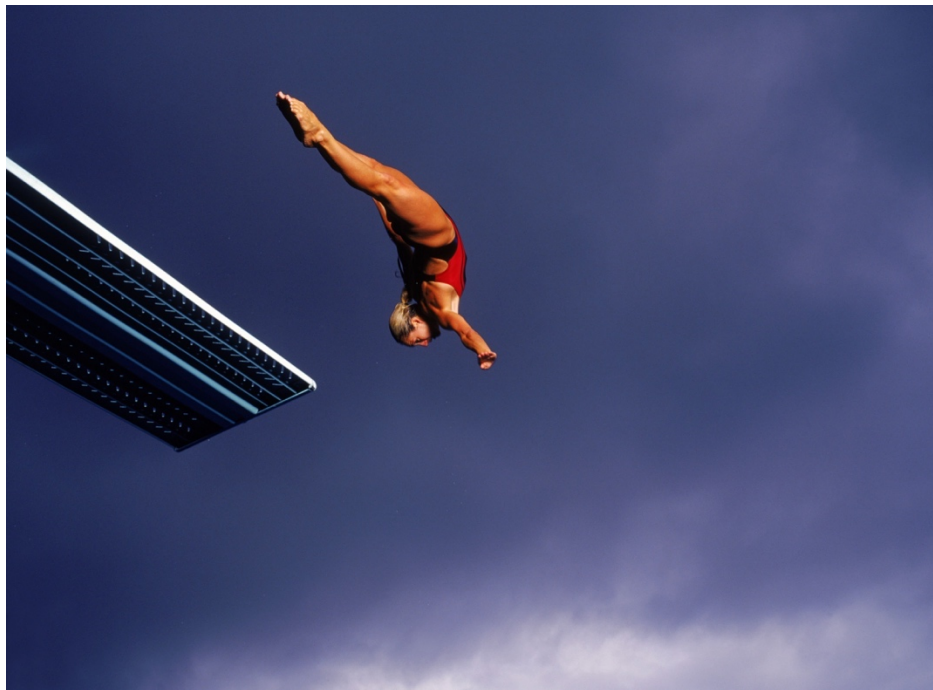
An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

– Maya Angelou

This is #3 of 12 experiments for the year, offered to get you inspired, thinking creatively, and organized in the pursuit of bold life ambitions of deep personal meaning. Experiments [1](#) and [2](#) concentrate on the big question of WHY (aspire to live and leave a life respecting your greatest gifts and passions). They provoke you to think about life – your ideal versus the current version – and death – those things for which you want to be remembered as you pass into the great goodbye.

This March Experiment starts the migration of WHY to WHAT. If you’re still reading these essays then you’re likely loath to the idea of retirement years spent in the wading pool. That deep end of the grand basin feels risky, but damn if that diving board doesn’t look fun. WHY make the effort to mount the board, muster some courage, and take the leap? WHAT will you find at the bottom of the pool? Onward.



Is it important dive deep, especially if after a life of impressive achievement? I argue that it is for at least 4 reasons:

1. Midlife is the best moment to dream big and realize your authentic self. You likely have some stores of savings, the kids are gone, your network is extensive, health is still good, mind is still sharp, time is available, and your life experiences have bestowed a wisdom to which your younger self had no access. Are you going to waste this golden moment?
2. Your accomplishments to date, impressive as they may be, may not reflect *the untold story inside you*. Amazing mom, corporate CEO; both and many titles in between are impressive laureates. If that's all that needs be told and you're fine with that résumé on your stone block, god bless and job well done. If not, there's no better time to start on a new epithet. (See point 1.)
3. You'll likely live a longer, richer life. Study after study of repeatable, empirical evidence reveals that pursuing authentic life purpose is a key to happiness, good health, and more days on top of the dirt. Just a few sources include centers of research led by [Martin Seligman](#) (UPenn), [Sonja Luybomirsky](#) (UC Riverside), [Barbara Fredrickson](#) (UNC Chapel Hill), and the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley. The results of an [85-year Harvard study](#) published just last month show that the essential ingredients to longer, happier lives orbit around positive relationships. And one key component of these is the personal growth enjoyed from the pursuit of purposeful life goals, shared with those you love.
4. The world needs your gift. There is so much beauty and so many problems in the world today. Perhaps your gift is artistic expression, perhaps it's helping people in need, maybe it's retracing the voyage of Kon-Tiki in a balsa log boat. Regardless, we all benefit. Jimmy Carter stands at the gate to ascension as I write this note, in hospice care back in Plains, Georgia. He was President of the United States; the most powerful man on earth. Now that's a colossal accomplishment on which to call it a day and retire to the Palm Beach club set. But Jimmy's legacy had only begun. Nobel Prize recipient, tireless human rights and healthcare advocate, green energy pioneer, Habitat for Humanity founder, and loving husband and dad. *We're going to need a bigger headstone!* He will leave this world a much, much better place for all of us to live.

### **The Mission Definition Experiment:**

Some of us know well our deepest passions and where purpose resides. We understand our gifts, have dabbled with daring projects, and hold a solid sense of how to make a difference. Some of us have no clue. The most of us are somewhere in between.

There are an endless number of books available on uncovering your purpose (see *additional reading* below). I offer here 3 exercises on Options, Motivations, and Activities that will be helpful in surfacing possibilities should you be in that *not really sure* category.

#### Exercise 1: Options (let's boil the ocean, shall we?)

1. List all previous existing ideas of hobbies, passions, or curiosities that you've considered pursuing when you had more time.
2. Identify enjoyable activities from your career. What parts of your jobs did you love doing (as opposed to those you dreaded)?
3. What activities put you in a Flow state; that is, when engaged in them your strengths are challenged and mind 100% immersed, numb to other distractions, and you lose all sense of time.
4. What's on your bucket list if you have 12 months to live?
5. What types of roles, activities, or responsibilities do you want to avoid?
6. Compare these lists and look for themes.

#### Exercise 2: Motivations

What is driving you to develop a greater sense of purpose? Why commit your energy, spend your savings, and abandon the *easy life* for a more deeply *engaged life*? What are your motivations?

This is a short list of 33 possible motivations that may be driving you, just a slice of total possibilities. Create your own, select 5, and look for themes.

Earn income	Have flexibility in schedule	Feel needed
Be engaged	Health insurance, benefits	Lead others
Be fulfilled	Feel productive	Mentor others
Have fun	Work on social issues	Change scenery
Socialize	Contribute my talents	Develop new skills
Find more structure	Stay challenged	Be creative
Feel satisfied	Be my own boss	Leave a legacy
Find new uses for my skills	Pursue a life-long passion	Remain active, healthy
Find more meaning in life	Solve problems	Help others
Be inspired	Be part of a team	Do something interesting
Continue to learn	Make a full-time salary	Add to retirement income

### Exercise 3: Activities

Create a table of activities from your career or life roles and identify those that you enjoyed and those that created the greatest discomfort. The table should include your job/role title, activities performed in each, and focus of those activities. Circle the activities you enjoyed and strike through those that you did not. Look for themes.

In my professional career I was an analyst, investor, and professor and I present my own table here as a sample.

Job	Activities	Focus
Market analyst	reading, interviewing, analyzing, estimating, forecasting, writing, presenting	Market research
Equities analyst	reading, analyzing, forecasting, traveling, persuading, balancing, stressing, winning/losing	Equities research
Venture capitalist	fundraising, meeting, grasping, traveling, comparing, rejecting, negotiating, investing, directing	Startup funding
Professor	reading, preparing, teaching, writing, mentoring, guiding, sharing	Education

### Your Mission

These exercises may not uncover a specific project, but should be effective in setting your North Star. In the business world this is referred to as a company's Mission and revealed through a Mission Statement. (Some life coaches refer to it as a Vision Statement; take your pick.) It has little to do with what a company actually produces, but succinctly encapsulates its core customer value. Three examples:



*To create happiness for people of all ages, everywhere.*



*To accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy.*



PASSION. BALANCE. PURPOSE.

*To provide the resources, tools, courage, and community to pursue grand ambitions of deep personal meaning.*

Nowhere here are specific products or services mentioned. Nothing about theme parks or electric vehicles or life leaping programs. But everything these companies do will align with their Mission Statements. If not, either the statements or the offerings must be reconsidered.

You should be ready to take a first pass at your Mission Statement if you've worked through the exercises above. What value will you offer the world and how will it tell that story inside? Focus on value not product or specific project. Think about your customers. There may be millions, there may be just 1: you. This is your life, your bold ambition, your interprize. What will it give us? Where will it lead you? What's that North Star?

### Additional reading

There is an endless list of books written on the topic of finding life purpose. No single one is considered the definitive work. I've read just a few and these are some titles I found particularly helpful:

*Finding Your Element: How to Discover Your Talents and Passions and Transform Your Life.* - Ken Robinson

*The Encore Career Handbook: How to Make a Living and a Difference in the Second Half of Life.* - Marci Alboher

*At the Crossroads of Should and Must: Find and Follow Your Passion.* - Elle Luna (I absolutely love this book)

If you have come across books on passion and purpose that you find powerful, please share in a comment or contact me at [bill@interprizegroup.com](mailto:bill@interprizegroup.com).



## Interlectual Property

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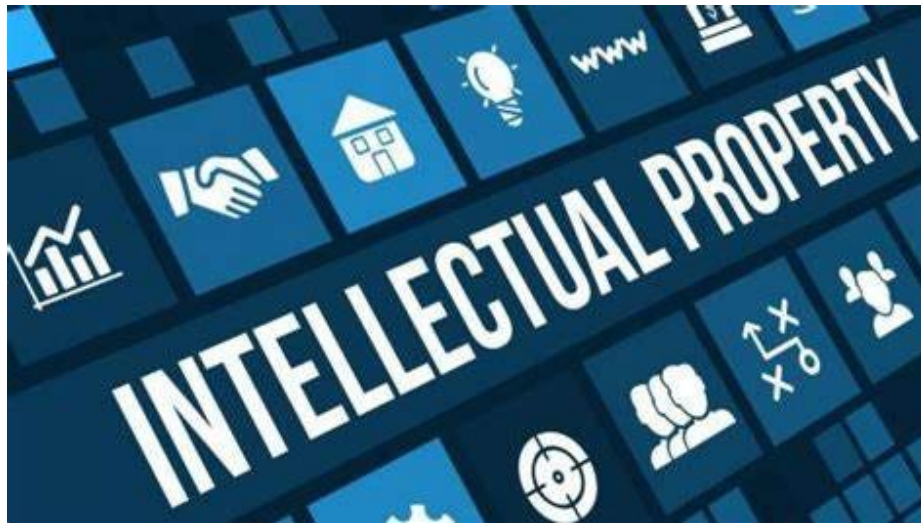
An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

“Human resources are like natural resources; they're often buried deep. You have to go looking for them; they're not just lying around on the surface.”

- Ken Robinson

Our first 3 essays focused on the WHY (do something grand for your encore act) and WHAT (that might be). You may be still wrestling with these questions; they are big and it's an iterative process. This experiment pushes on towards the HOW (you'll do it). It will prompt a review of your *Interlectual Property*. *My what, you ask?* Onward.

Interlectual Property (with an “r”) is a contrived term we've co-opted from the world of deep science startups. Merriam-Webster defines Intellectual Property (with an “l”) as any “property (such as an idea, invention, or process) that derives from the work of the mind or intellect.” Disruptive Intellectual Property is key to a deep tech startup's competitive advantage and typically protected through patents.

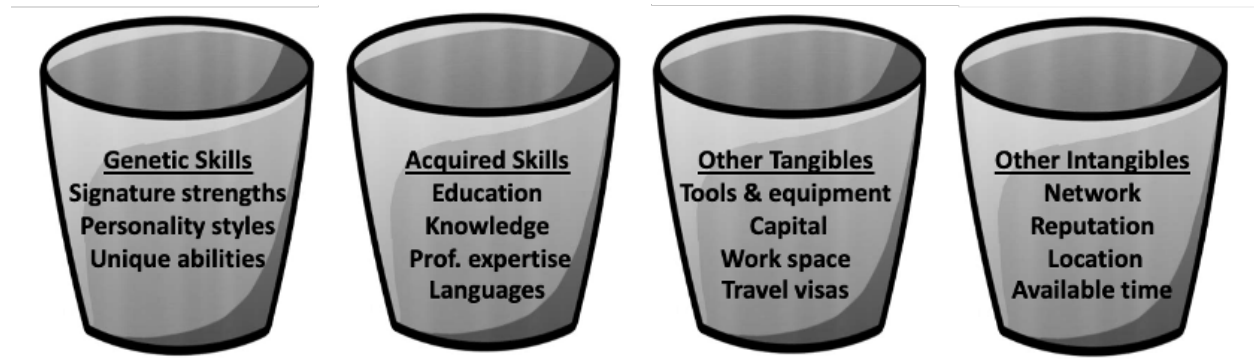


Your personal Interlectual Property, or IrP for short, also includes creative ideas that distinguish your grand ambition from the fray – *my hip laundromat will offer a beer bar, used book library, and live music!* – plus other resources that support your pursuits: money, education, contacts, specialized equipment, location, etc. Getting these down on paper helps display what you have, and even more critically what more you need to develop a compelling, successful effort. (Fair admission: we just like the work *Interlectual*.)



## Buckets

When surveying your many resources to exploit think about these 4 buckets as a starting point. The contents will differ depending on your own unique history.



**Bucket 1** is a collection of your natural signature strengths, personality style, and unique abilities gifted from birth. Why identify your natural strengths? Playing to them will give you an inherent advantage from Day 1 and help advance your efforts more effectively, which feeds confidence, which encourages an even bigger effort; a virtuous cycle.

The great sages of optimism, such as Martin Seligman (“Flourish”) and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (“Flow”) agree that building on one’s natural strengths is key to personal growth and fostering authentic happiness. Knowing your strengths – natural and learned – also reveals the holes in your game, which can be filled through purchase or additional training.





Many different evaluations have been developed to define and measure strengths and styles. Two that we like and use in our Life Leap Workshops include:

*The VIA Survey of Character Strengths*, [available here](#) at UPenn's Authentic Happiness Center. This test provides a ranking of 24 signature strengths that define your authentic power base. Bravery, fairness, creativity, honesty, and 20 others are included.

*The Enneagram Personality Test*, [available here](#) at Truity. The Enneagram is a set of 9 personality types. Perfectionist, peacemaker, enthusiast, and 6 other classifications are included. You'll find a bit of yourself in all 9, but one will capture your true signature style with startling accuracy. While Truity offers an online test for free I recommend having a professional take you through an evaluation for a much deeper and thorough reading. Contact me for a reference if needed.

**Bucket 2** is a collection of those learned assets acquired through life. Some may prove essential to your encore ambitions, some not so much. It's a valuable exercise to list them all. Your grand ambition in 6 months may be different than the one today, and some former skill sets may suddenly find new relevance.

**Bucket 3** is a space for all other major tangible assets that have value, whether or not for the legacy project you're considering. Money is always helpful, as is specialized equipment, especially for artistic endeavors.

Through a life of writing, performing, and recording music I have a collection of quality guitars, amplifiers, microphones, and recording equipment (my wife Alexandra had deep reserves of patience, definitely one of her signature strengths). This equipment is valuable for my encore ambition to get a rock musical produced and staged, and some pieces are indispensable as well for recording podcasts and short videos for my Interprize Group-related work.

**Bucket 4** may require some creative thinking. Intangible assets in the business world include items like goodwill and unique knowledge/know-how that can't be easily quantified. They are not physical and can be challenging to appraise. But there may indeed be real IrP value in the network of friends and professional contacts you've cultivated through the years, and the appreciation these people have of you. *Hey, I'm working on a bold life ambition of very deep personal mean, ... and I need a favor. Absolutely!*

I live in a stunningly charming city – Aix-en-Provence – in one of the most appealing geographies in the world – the south of France. It's a life choice, not strategic decision, but I would be wasting a fabulous asset if I didn't leverage this location for Life Leap Workshops and other gatherings. It's a big selling point that has an incremental cost of 0 to me (I'm

living here anyhow). People just naturally want to visit. No arm twisting required. Put it down as an intangible!

### **The Interlectual Property Experiment:**

Last month we talked about different experiments you can run to bubble up ideas on purposeful legacy ambitions. By now you should have at least a solid sense of Mission, a North Star piloting possibilities and plans. This experiment will reinforce those considerations by identifying the resources you can draw on now and those you'll need to acquire in that pursuit (or pursuits if multiple).

1. Create your 4 bucket lists of skills and assets as outlined above. Take time to fill them thoroughly with the major assets you have acquired through life, including both those that should be helpful with current ambitions, and those that are not at the moment, but may prove valuable in the future.
2. Revisit your Mission Statement and motivations from Experiments 1 – 3 and identify those assets listed that are key in the pursuit of your Interprize; your bold life pursuit.
3. Create a new list – of assets needed but not yet acquired – and determine how you can attain them: buy them, learn them, ask others who have these skills or assets to join your effort, or other options.
4. Formalize you IrP strategy:
  1. IrP you have
  2. IrP you need
  3. Your plan for filling in the holes

Don't avoid leaning on your community of friends and family for support strengthening your abilities and assets. Study after study have shown the importance of personal relationships in building optimism and life enrichment, including this recent 85-year definitive study by Harvard ([click here](#) for the article in the Atlantic). If they love you they'll want to help, ... and they do.



## Product-Passion Fit

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Published originally on May 1, 2023.

An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

*There is no passion to be found playing small; in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.*

- Nelson Mandela

For this fifth experiment in the art of *interpreneurship* I again borrow heavily from my work in *entrepreneurship*. Not clear on the difference, [click here](#).

*Customer empathy* is a core pillar of business model creation and taught in business schools worldwide, including in my startup courses for INSEAD and the American College of the Mediterranean (ACM), here in Aix-en-Provence. A book I'm cowriting at the moment on deep tech commercialization has a chapter committed to it, with this passage at the start:

*Capturing customer empathy has risen to the apex of critical deliverables in most workshops, courses, and publications on business model development. It resides at the core of lean-inspired startup methodologies, and for good reason. Before precious time and significant sums of capital are invested (and likely wasted) in product development it is essential to understand the customers' needs, pains, limitations, and other factors that help you maximize value through product design and a go-to-market strategy.*

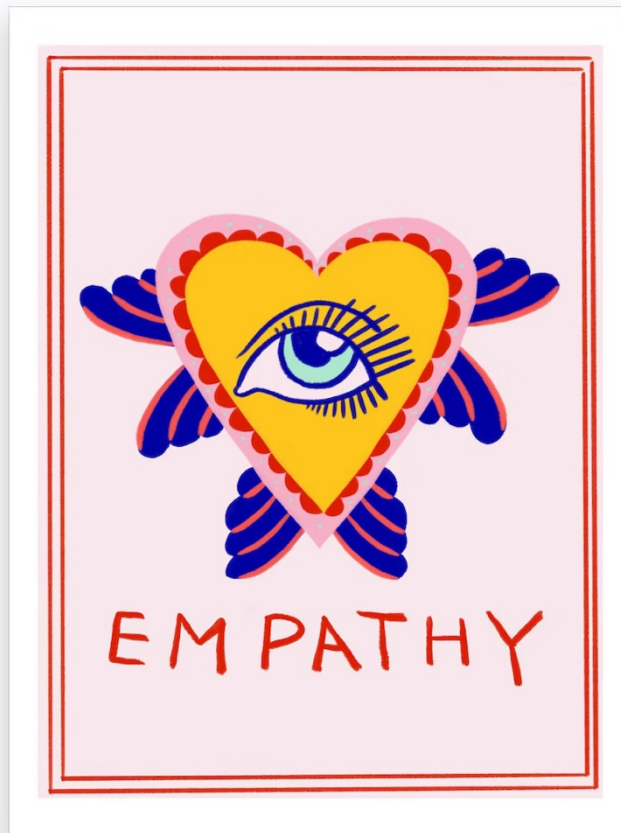
The pursuit of a grand personal ambition – your interprize – also requires the mastery of customer empathy to maximize commercial success. But there is a distinct beauty to interpreneurial endeavors: the *primary* metrics of success are not measured in units shipped or profits made, but rather in passions fed and purpose found.

That sounds seductive (and poetically penned!). Let's take a deeper dive.

### On Customer Empathy

*Empathy: the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another.*

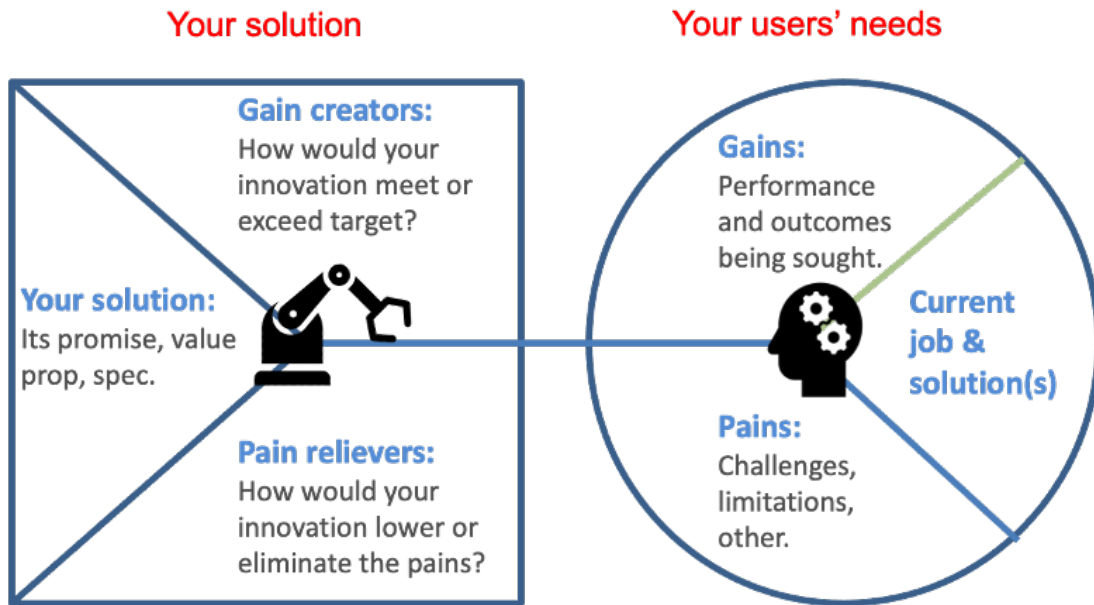
Merriam-Webster Dictionary



Entrepreneurs are an excitable lot. They experience a business epiphany or make a science discovery and the eyes go Davey Jones sparkly. Bank accounts are drained, months are consumed, and deep in the dark bowels of a lab or living room a shiny new widget is perfected. Then off to the market they charge with a world-beating solution and heart full of hope, ... and inevitable disappointment.

Entrepreneurship 101 now leads us with market need, not product design. Okay, you have a promising concept. Now, who is the target customer; what work are they doing; how can your concept bring gains to their undertaking of that work; how can your concept reduce pains in their undertaking of that work? *Customer empathy* is MBA-speak for the process of working through these questions and gaining a deeper sympathy for your customer and their job *BEFORE* focusing on product perfection.

An illustration of the customer empathy process looks like this:



Source: Strategyzer, *The Value Proposition Canvas* (adapted by the Interprize Group)

## On Customer Compassion

*Compassion: a sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.*

Marriam-Webster Dictionary

Compassion goes one step further than empathy. It requires action. Being deeply empathetic to the customer experience is a critical Step 1. Figuring out how to apply that understanding to optimize customer happiness is the compassionate Step 2. This is achieved through effective product/service design, delivery, support, and other business model elements that amplify user gains and reduce user pains.



As a new shiny widget's features and support align with the customers' wants and needs we arrive at *product-market fit* (yet more business school speak). It's a guiding principle to product design that requires constant validation and tweaks.

### The Interprize Exception

Interpreneurs and entrepreneurs have a lot in common, particularly the desire to create something of great value and share it with the world. But we interpreneurs enjoy one crucial exception: the pilot customer is facing us in the mirror. Our fundamental motivation for the early mornings and late nights and hard-earned savings spent is in the search for purpose that is found through this sharing.

That search takes precedence over the market competitiveness and profit optimization of our shiny new widget. And this liberating distinction gives us great license to create in our own image, to nourish our deepest passions, possibly and acceptably to the detriment of success as measured in conventional business terms. We call this hybrid principle *product-passion fit*. (That term is very much NOT business school speak.)

### Examples may be helpful:

Marcia is a classic interpreneur. Her *core career* was spent mostly in marketing and sales in Silicon Valley's tech world of venture-backed, high-flying startups. Living for the moment in Provence, she is an artist of impressive talent, and the sharing of this gift guides her *encore career*.

Marcia just completed my course on startup entrepreneurship at the ACM, working through 10 weeks of Bill Magill on mission statements and elevator pitches and product-market fits and business model canvases and fundraising, ... and yes, also on customer empathy.





*Jeux d'Ombres*, Marcia Mason Speece

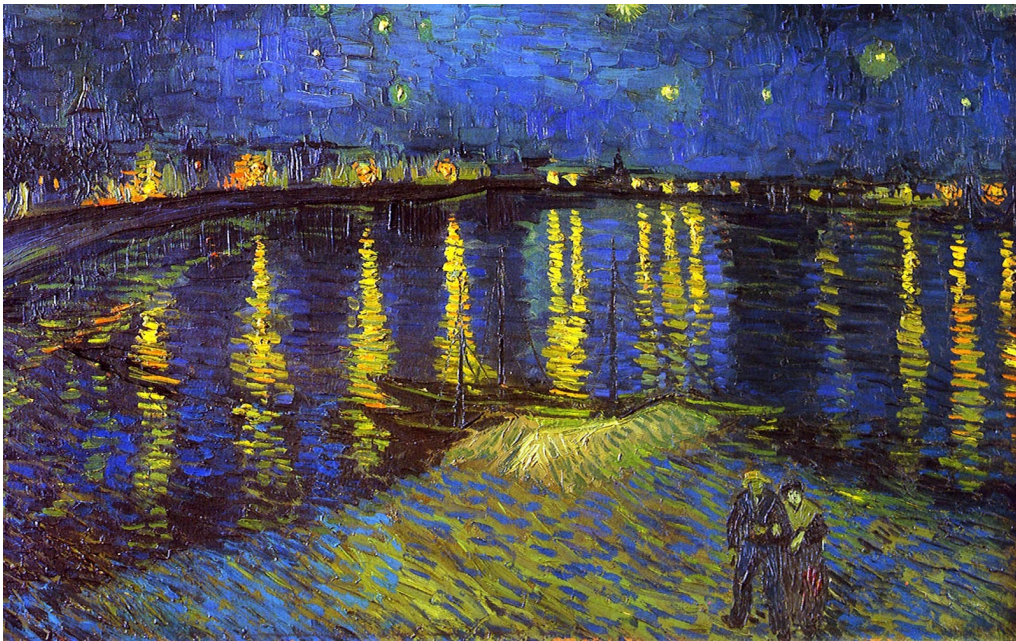
She was a great student and this grounding in basic entrepreneurship should enable even greater success with the spread and sales of her art. That is important, not only in helping pay the bills but validating her gift with the buying public. But Marcia will paint her garden watercolors irrespective of market success. It is her interprize, that prize within. It's something she cannot not do. It defines who she is. It is her passion and through the sharing of this gift she finds purpose. Validation IS appreciated. Validation IS NOT the paramount objective. With her encore career she's seeking product-passion fit.

My interprize is to write and stage rock dramas. I could plow ahead with a script and music and charge off to Broadway in search of open arms. Or, before setting pen to paper and fingers to keys, I could make an effort to understanding the arts of musical development and script writing, my specific audience (young, old, rockers, opera goers, theatre regulars, theatre newbies), what they want in a story (old stories reimagined, new stories freshly written), where they want to experience it (the stage, at home on a streaming series, watching a YouTube video, listening to Spotify, some mix of all), and so on.

My chances of getting staged are much higher if I first respect the craft that is my craft and the content qualities gaining market interest. But I will write these dramas regardless of their chances, and in my own voice. And I will not be limited to an algorithm's guidance of what's trending now. Writing music is something I cannot not do. I have finished one ([click here](#) for a listen to *Last Night at the Ha-Ra* if curious) and am working on my second rock drama now.

A final word on creative integrity.

Van Gogh had a wholly unique style. It is not that he was disinterested in what others were doing. On the contrary, his influences were many, including the Dutch Masters like Rembrandt and Hague School celebrities trending at the time. But unlike his contemporaries he remained ignored and famously broke for most of his life, and that speaks to his creative integrity. A healthy dose of customer empathy might have steered him in other directions. He chose to prioritize product-passion fit over product-market fit. The world is the better for it.



*Starry Night over the Rhône, Vincent Van Gogh*

### **The Product-Passion Fit Experiment:**

(Refer to the diagram above if helpful.)

For your interprize concept:

1. Create a profile of your targeted customer archetype(s). Descriptors may include age, location, education, affluence, and other qualities that best characterize their particular attributes.
2. What jobs or activities are they doing related to your concept? For Marcia and her Watercolor Garden that list may include finding watercolor artists online (or locally)



who have a particular focus on garden scenes, evaluating their work, buying and framing original pieces, having the same art rendered on cards and sacs, returning items, etc.

3. Build customer empathy by listing the pains they suffer and gains they would value while doing these activities. Apply customer compassion by turning this empathy into action items you can do to reduce these pains and amplify the gains.

Now, walk away from this activity for an hour or a day, then...

4. Reflect on how this act of compassion will impact your interprize project. In the perfect world they will align by reinforcing your sense of validation and accomplishment. More people finding and buying Marcia's art. More musical lovers and critics finding and applauding my dramas. But the world is often not perfect. Making customers' needs the overarching priority may pull you off your North Star ([click here](#) to refer to Experiment #3, Your Mission Definition). I may favor an abstract musical style that fewer people love. If crafting in that style for those few feeds my passion and gives me purpose, then I've maximized product-passion fit and the world will be better for it.



## Getting on Brand

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Published originally on June 1, 2023.

An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

“A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within him the image of a cathedral.”

- Antoine de Saint-Exupery

This mid-point experiment focuses on your brand; aka, that perceived image the world holds of you. *I don't need a brand!* you say. Inside tip: you have one. Rock pile or cathedral. It's not a question of creating your brand, it's the importance of managing it. Onward!

### Brand Management

IF you're at midlife and considering an exciting encore career, committed to pursuing a grand (dare we say audacious!) ambition of deep personal meaning for your second act,

THEN you need a keiretsu of supporters, partners, and (possibly) paying customers THAT need to be persuaded of your dream's merits, WHICH mean selling yourself as well as the dream.

This requires a compelling brand.

You may think you're just writing a book. First, you're selling the image of an exceptionally talented, uniquely insightful master of words and storytelling. *Underwood on the table, disheveled bookshelf behind, contemplative stare*. If not, why would anyone besides mom support your effort or buy your book? (Over 3.5 million books are published annually in the US alone; plenty of options.)



Francoise Peschon, renovator of Vine Hill Ranch, Napa Valley

You may think you're just reviving an old, neglected winery. First, you're selling the image of a passionate oenophile who loves tending the vines and is committed to relaunching a label with respect to the quality and history of that abandoned, storied vineyard. *Tattered straw hat on head, glass of red in hand, big smile.* If not, why would anyone besides mom support your effort or buy your wine? (Over 11,000 wineries bottle the grape in the US alone; plenty of options.)

You may be pursuing a dream that is completely noncommercial. Going back to school to earn an MFA in English Literature. Organizing a group climb of Mount Kilimanjaro, perhaps to raise money for Cystic Fibrosis, or maybe just because it's there. In these and other towering ambitions you'll be engaging with others – your patrons – and they'll decide on the time and energy level you warrant. Warrant a lot. It will build your confidence and boost your chances of getting up that mountain. Nothing gets achieved alone.

All companies big and small work hard on their brand. Most startup founders do as well. Elizabeth Holmes, of the late Theranos scandal, branded herself as the next Steve Jobs and raised \$945 million on the turtleneck ruse. (The rebranded Liz Holmes started her stint at a federal prison facility in Texas this week, sans turtleneck.) Entrepreneurs need a brand. Interpreneurs likewise need a brand.

## The Getting On Brand Experiment:

“Customers don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it”.

- Simon Sinek ([Click here](#) for his insightful video on WHY versus WHAT.)

There is an infinite selection of articles on brand creation and management at the click of a Google search, offering 5 or 7 or 10 steps to brand nirvana. I’ve read a few, talked with my friend Noel Thevenet, an expert in the field of tech branding, and even asked my 2 AI PAs: ChatGPT and Pi. Common threads weave through all of this advice, starting with WHY you do what you do, not WHAT.

This takes us back to our first 2 experiments of the year, *The Wheel of Life* and *My Eulogy*, which are all about finding your WHY (pursue a grand ambition of deep personal meaning). Your brand must emote from the WHY, then be reflected in the WHAT.

With that in mind, here are 4 solid steps to launch a search for your brand:

1. List what you stand for as reflected in the key values, passions, strengths, and other qualities that collectively power that pursuit of your grand (dare we say audacious!) ambition.
2. Develop a concise message that best captures these qualities. Does it reveal both what you offer and the core values of your interprize? Does the brand statement reflect benefits to your patrons; those people reading your book, drinking your wine, or joining you up on that mountain?
3. Is the brand in harmony with the Mission Statement you created in Experiment 3: *Your Mission Definition*? Together they should align with the North Star guiding everything your interprize stands for: fulfilling your purpose, serving your patrons, impacting your community, and being a positive force in the world.
4. Does the brand feel honest to the authentic you? Presenting yourself as a bookish writer or wine-stained vintner might feel right to the role, but will kill your credibility in the long run if proven to be disingenuous. Just ask Liz.

As with earlier experiments, I encourage you to step away from your brand statement for a few hours, then take a fresh look. The next morning reread it as well. With each review you may tweak this or that to strengthen the identity. You may decide to restart from the beginning. Paint yourself and your ambition in a beautiful, authentic light that draws people in. Play with it. Enjoy it. Don’t rush it.

## Other Considerations

Crafting your brand identity through a well-honed statement is just Step 1 in brand creation. Communicating it through logos, colors, music, and a web presence that together creates an emotional connection with your patrons is essential. So is revealing it to your network and constantly checking for consistency. Again, there are plenty of free online resources for this: podcasts, articles, edX courses, and other.

When I launched the Interprize Group in 2013 I hired a professional designer to collaborate on my logo. My WHY? I was passing through a phase of intense personal reinvention, having just moved to Provence from San Francisco, and wanted to leverage what I was learning (through so many mistakes) *to encourage and enable others in their pursuits of bold ambitions of deep personal meaning.*



Tarik had a few proposals and we ultimately settled on the color green (for abundance and rebirth), a custom font (to reflect playfulness but competency), and a circle surrounded by inward facing tips (to impart community and openness). Money wisely invested, and the infinitely talented Tarik Koivisto remains a good friend to this day. (Her own professional reinvention – [Luxe Provence](#) – is branded as *a slow fashion and lifestyle brand celebrating effortless chic*. Check it out.



# The Life Leap Canvas

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Published originally on July 10, 2023

An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

“The distance between *I could have* and *I have* is regret.”

- Ankur Warikoo, from “Do Epic Shit”

The Life Leap Canvas (LLC) is a visual tool helpful in brainstorming and framing the pursuit of your interprize, or your *epic shit* as Warikoo would say. The past 6 Experiments were designed to uncover North Stars that guide life leaps that build purpose and fuel passions. The LLC displays these and other critical elements and their connections in a simple, invaluable visual.

We’ve adapted the tool from the Business Model Canvas (BMC), taught in business schools around the world (including my courses at INSEAD) and used by entrepreneurs when creating business models for their startup ideas. Many thanks to Alexander Osterwalder at Strategyzer for his origination of the BMC and many other tools for mapping entrepreneurial endeavors. You can find a link to them [here](#).

## Blueprinting Your Life Leap

There is no obvious, guaranteed strategy for pursuing a grand life leap. The LLC will not create one for you. Operating from a base of assumptions about launching, say, a midlife career in art or founding a school for underprivileged children (just examples of 2 inspiring interpreneurs I know), you’ll experience a series of victories and setbacks, both of which provide valuable learning moments. The LLC should help limit the setbacks and move you closer to victories more quickly. It is a living, breathing diagram that reflects your best thinking at this moment on this day and how that knowledge is improving from these many lessons learned. Update it regularly as your knowledge base builds.

The LLC is comprised of 9 cells as illustrated bellow. The cells in blue highlight the opportunity space you’re pursuing, those in green the ambition and resources through which it is sought. Across the bottom are 2 grey cells reflecting the costs and rewards of Interprize implementation. You have limited control over the blue cells but need to understand them deeply. You’ll have total control over the green cells and need to optimize them accordingly.

Let’s look at each in more detail and in the order they would be initially filled.

Grand ambition  <i>What you offer</i>	IP available now  <i>resources available</i>	Value proposition  <i>how you serve</i>	Channels  <i>how they find you</i>	Patrons & beneficiaries  <i>who you serve</i>
	IP to be added  <i>resources needed</i>		Partners & allies  <i>who helps you</i>	
Sacrifices and costs  <i>What you give</i>		Rewards & revenues  <i>How you gain</i>		

The Life Leap Canvas

First a clarification: In commercial markets there may be a difference between the client (who pays you, or is the gatekeeper of your payments) and the consumer (who benefits from your offering). In my world of musical theatre the theatre is the client, the theatregoer is the consumer. To optimize my chances of success in this business I need to write a musical that the client believes will put consumers in their seats. So, I create 2 LLCs to clearly delineate my client from consumer, each with different needs, channels, and other elements that need to be understood. I encourage this if you also have multiple patrons to consider.

### The Life Leap Canvas Experiment:

Start working through your LLC in this order:

1. Patrons & beneficiaries

Firstly, the critical beneficiary of any interpreneurial pursuit is you, full stop. You shouldn't be committing precious time, energy, and capital otherwise. That accepted, who is the target patron for this LLC? Who, after you, stands to enjoy the greatest value from your life leap? Who's needs and desires are you targeting most acutely? Who will compensate your ambitions?



2. Value proposition

How does your life leap satisfy the needs and desires for your targeted patron(s)? How does it create value for them? In Experiment #3 we discuss your Mission, that North Star guiding everything you do. This will help focus on the greatest value you are committed to developing for yourself and others.

3. Grand ambition

Now that you have defined your patrons (far right cell) and their needs that your project should resolve, how does your life leap specifically get this accomplished (far left cell)? This is your grand ambition; your interprize. It fills out the descriptive details of your offering; paints in the numbers. In Experiment #5 a Value Proposition Canvas is offered and explained (another tool adapted from the folks at Strategyzer: click [here](#)). It will help tighten the alignment of your ambition with those who most appreciate it.

4. Channels

If a tree falls in a forest and no one is there to hear it,... you know the rest. You may have the most amazing gift, but your patrons still need to know you exist. How do they find you? Where do they seek out offerings like yours? Global social media? Local farmers markets? Do you need an agent? Is there a government agency to connect with? Do you proactively reach out? You have an amazing gift to offer. Your patrons are looking for amazing gifts. How do you make the connection?

5. Partners & allies

No ambitious pursuit is accomplished in a vacuum. You need help, allies in your corner, partners who care about your success, which might be fueling their success. Are these co-creators, investors, gallery owners, agencies directors, or other? Who can help and how do you entice their support? Can you pay it forward, for this is always appreciated when it's possible.

6. IP available now

In Experiment #4 you were asked to list all the assets you possess now that can be leveraged in the pursuit of your grand life ambition: education, experience and skills, reputation, connections, cash, special equipment, etc. We call this your Interlectual Property (IP). List these in the appropriate cell.

7. IP to be added

What IP is missing to most effectively make that epic life leap? As in cell #6 this could be more cash, targeted contacts, specials tools and equipment, additional training, etc. By filling these in you can see clearly what IP you have and what you need. Now how do you go about getting it?



8. Rewards & revenues

What are the rewards you seek through the journey and attainment of your life leap? Is income paramount, and if yes how much would mark success? Are you looking for critical acclaim and recognition? By whom? Renovating an old abandoned winery? How many bottles do you plan to sell, at what price? Will the journey experience be enough, despite the result? You may want to review the Wheel of Life from Experiment #1. The *ideal life* reflected in your *ideal wheel* should match up with this cell of rewards.

9. Sacrifices & costs

What are you prepared to commit to your life leap adventure? Create a budget that includes expenses and sacrifices - financial and other - and enter here. Will you need training and if so what will that cost? Is a move required? Will you be spending less time with dear friends and precious family? Must you abandon certain pleasurable habits and customs? Placing these considerations next to your anticipated rewards offers a helpful comparison when justifying the pursuit.

The LLC will be an essential tool for visualizing and brainstorming that grand life ambition propelling your encore life leap. If helpful, a copy of the LLC can be down loaded [here](#).



# Ship, Wind, and Bearing: Your Sailing Adventure

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Published originally on August 1, 2023.

An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

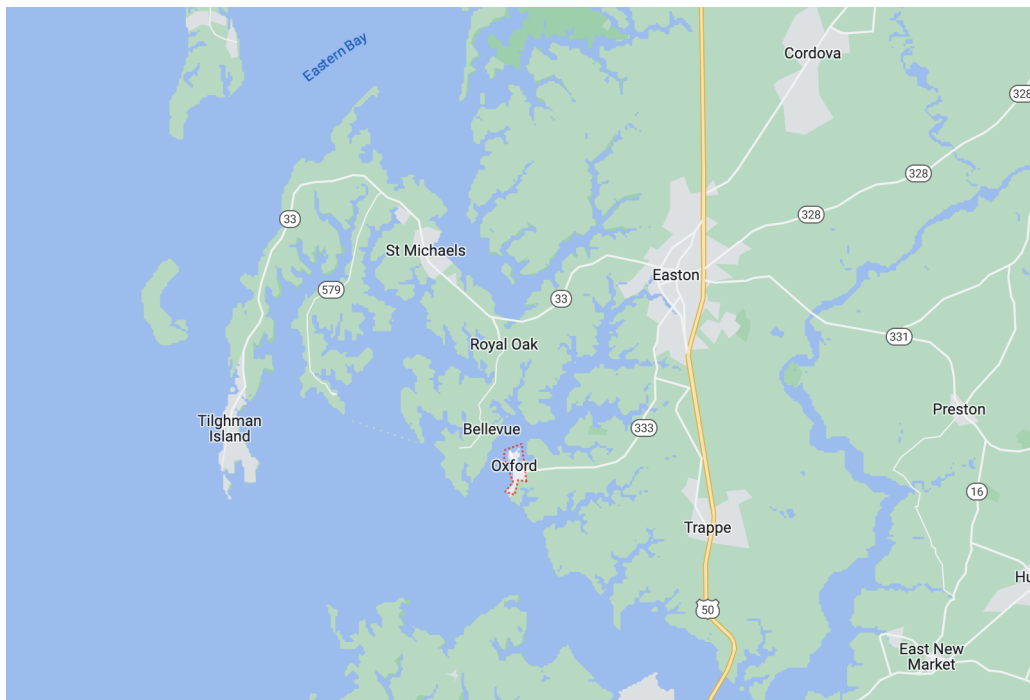
“All I ask is a tall ship and a star to sail her by.”

- John Masefield

Our 2023 experiments to this point have focused on the *process* of interpreneurial planning. That is (and as with any startup), what is my dream, why does it matter, who cares most, and how do I get organized and launched? This experiment focuses on something much more meta: the personal balance required within if your interpreneurial ambitions have any chance at success. Onward!

## A Trinity of Strengths

If you're enjoying this 2023 series of Life Leap experiments you're likely embarked on a daring life adventure, or considering one. Successful journeys requires 3 things: a sturdy vessel, the energy to power it, and a map to your destination. To have any chance of realizing your Life Leap - regardless of your well of talent, the thrilling dreams you envision, or the masses waiting with arms wide open - a healthy respect for this trinity of strengths is required for success. Let's look at a helpful maritime analogy.

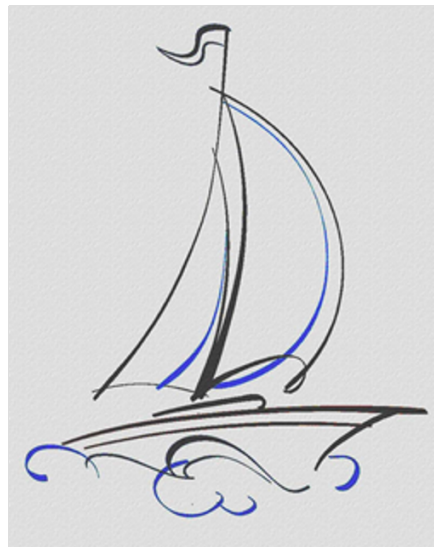


Maryland's enchanting Eastern Shore

I used to sail on the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay with my dad and brother during summer holidays. My dad would rent a boat and we'd take up residence at the historic Robert Morris Inn for a week. Mom and the sisters would join as well, but they weren't as keen on tacking around the bay all day.

My dad selected well-made sailboats - 30-some foot Ericsons or Pearsons, typically - and there was always a thorough set of nautical maps in the cabins. Each morning we would meet at breakfast praying for *good wind*: not a howling gale; not a listless draft; just a steady, powering breeze. *Where are we heading to today boys?*

Dad was not one for the aimless sail. Tilghman Island; Saint Michaels; Trippe Creek; there was always a destination set for the day as we motored out on the Tred Avon River, sailed down the Choptank, and then into the greater bay. We had the charts to go anywhere and knew how to read the winds. Out by 9, sandwiches for lunch, back by 4 and a bucket of steamed blue crabs to hold us over until dinner. These outings marked some of my warmest life memories. Truly blissful.

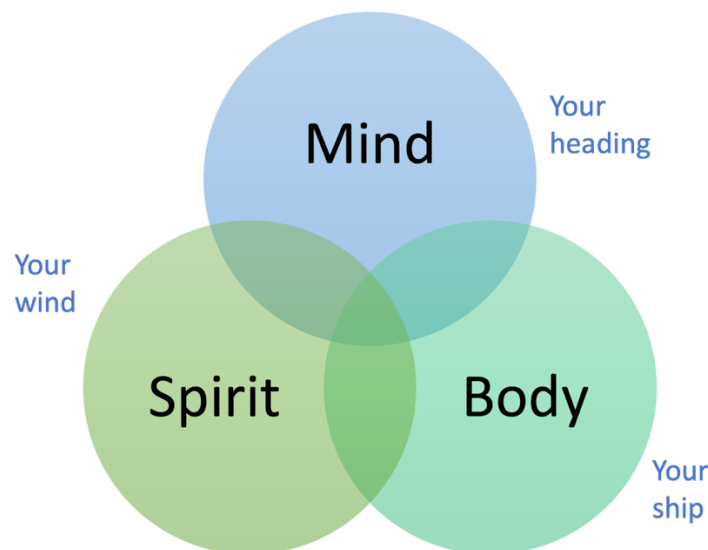


Sailing provides the perfect analogy for a successful life leap. The key ingredients are a sturdy ship, a steady wind, and a well-plotted map. If any single one of these is missing you'll commit endless time and boatloads of resources on a disappointing journey. The ship is your physical body. The wind is your passion for the journey. And the map is your Interprize Plan.

### **The Your Sailing Adventure Experiment:**

Consider the handicap of missing any one of the 3 and what you can do now to resolve the flaws:

- *A sturdy ship.* You may have a steady wind and know where you want to go, but a leaky ship can't get out of the harbor. If you don't honor your physical health and maintain a strong vessel, you'll struggle and exhaust with each advancing year. Find exercises that suit your interests and lifestyle. Try different things. Commit to the ones you love. A sturdy ship will help you ride out choppy seas. Stay robust.
- *A steady wind.* You may be jacked up, buffed out, and know where you want to go, but with no wind in your sails you're dead in the water. Emotional resilience is every bit as important as physical robustness. Mindfulness and meditation; the best rituals for building positivity (or happiness if you prefer); maintaining close friendships: these are just a few practices that build emotional resilience and will see you through some foreboding weather. Adopt the ones that suits you best. A positive outlook will keep your sails full. Stay resilient.
- *A well-plotted map.* Your ship is strong and the wind is blowing, but you have no clear direction. You tack from shore to shore but don't have a fixed heading. Where is your North Star? These 2023 experiments are designed to guide your design of that map: your Interprize Plan. What is the grand ambition that will feed your passion and fill you with purpose? How do you most effectively pursue it? Not clear, ... then please work through Experiments 1 through 7 again. They will help. Build that map: *x marks the spot*. Know where you're going and how to get there.



The Trinity of Strengths

Finding this balance is not something you suddenly achieve, it's something you continually pursue. The critical takeaway is that these 3 pillars are elemental to a grand life pursuit of

deep personal meaning. Constantly work to strengthen them. Our Life Leap Workshops are designed to do just that: instill the best practices of interpreneurial planning while immersing in rituals and routines for the body and soul.



## Prototyping the Prize

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Published originally on September 1, 2023.

An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

“In the old economy, it was all about having the answers. But in today’s dynamic, lean economy, it’s more about asking the right questions (about your prototype).”

- Eric Ries

Lean startup methodology is taught in every respectable business school on the planet as the best approach to innovation product development. Its core tenets center on (1) rapid design iterations that lead to (2) cost and time efficiency. Both are fundamental to the success of any startup hustling to get a compelling product into the market as quickly as possible on a limited budget. Rapid prototype development and the sharing of these with targeted users, repeatedly, is key. (Eric Ries wrote the book on this approach, literally, with *The Lean Startup*, published in 2012.)

So, for tech innovations ranging from ride-hailing mobile apps to sub-scale fusion reactors, entrepreneurs need a prototype strategy. Interpreneurs do as well, and that means you.

### That Entre- Versus Inter-preneurship Thing Again

Finding Product-Passion Fit was the topic of our May Experiment ([click here](#)). Optimizing your interprize in how it resolves your customer’s pains, needs, and desires. A key difference between entre- and inter-preneurship is that with the latter YOU are the critical customer #1. Is your interprize likely to fulfill your desires and perhaps even attract a few patrons? Developing prototypes is key to answering this question and strengthening the fit quickly and on a budget. I don’t know about you, but my grand ambitions are funded on a less-than-grand budget.

In the deep tech world entrepreneurs are encouraged to develop 3 levels of increasingly sophisticated prototypes that help answer these questions:

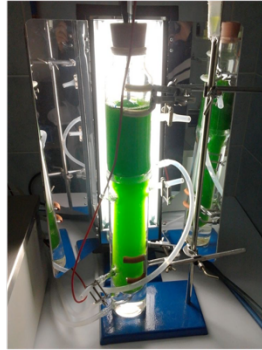
1. Proof-of-Concept: is the underlying science sound, i.e., not violating fundamental laws of physics, chemistry, or biology? Eureka, it works!
2. Alpha prototype: will the innovation function in a packaged assembly, even if said assembly is over-sized and crudely constructed? Hallelujah, it operates when assembled!



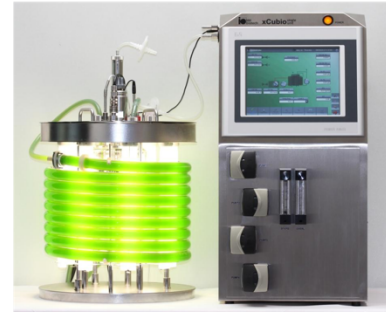
- Beta prototype (also referred to as a Minimum Viable Product): can the assembled innovation be packaged in a form factor more closely approximating a final product, even if just offering a set of minimal but critical features? Woo-hoo, it can be elegantly productized with at least a minimum feature set!



**Proof of Concept**  
Scientific Premise  
Internal Verification



**Alpha Prototype**  
Concept assembled  
Feedback from evangelists



**MVP**  
Assembly productized  
Feedback from the market

Prototypes for a photo-bioreactor (very cool stuff!)

The successful pursuit of any grand life ambition – your interprize – requires planning and pivots. We interpreneurs aren't likely developing deep tech innovations like photo-bioreactors, but still benefit greatly from patron exposure to early versions of our final target. The pivots are spurred by moments of revelation that our previous plans are flawed. Prototypes help reveal the flaws before we've committed a lot of time and money.

Two levels are possible for many creative endeavors. Here are examples:

## Music Prototypes

I release albums of original Bill Magill music. To find authenticity I write mostly for myself, provoked by personal experiences that have rattled my emotions. That said, I want people to hear my music, love my music, share my music, and perhaps even pay for my music ([Oh, Wouldn't it be Loverly?](#)). So, I'm seeking some level of group appeal without sacrificing a song's initial inspiration.

My alpha prototype: With guitar on knee or sitting at the piano I sing early versions of a new song to friends whom I know will provide honest feedback. *What do you think? Yeah, it's a good start, but needs another verse.*

My beta prototype: Once I'm convinced the structure of the song is close, I make a demo recording with multiple instruments. This can take a few days locked in my home studio,

but it costs me only time and allows me to continue to tweak. I share the demo with the same friends above and with my key musical collaborators. The sound isn't perfect – it's a prototype – but good enough for testing and feedback.

Only when I'm convinced the song is in great shape do we go into a recording studio, which is expensive. Because I've worked through 2 levels of prototyping, we can work through the song quickly and with some confidence that the final product will thrill our fans (fingers crossed, candles burned, and Mary's hailed).

## Writing Prototypes

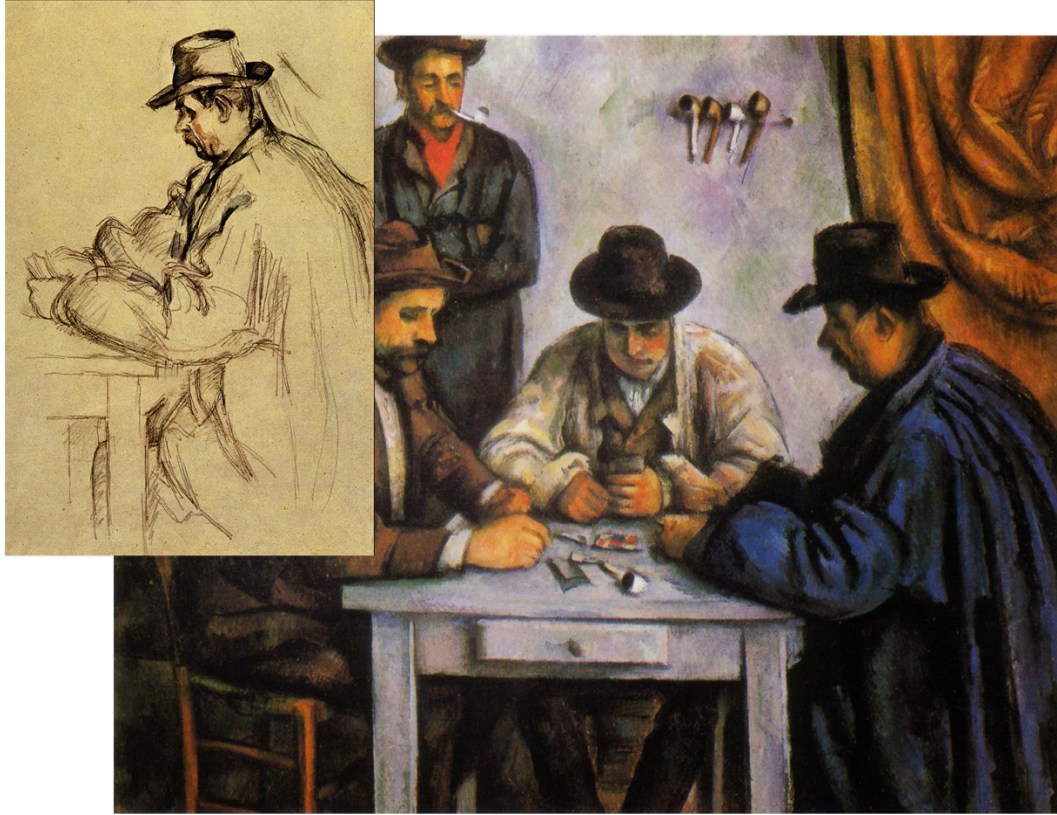
My friend Michael Finkel is professional author of growing repute. His true crime books have been turned into films and spent weeks on the NY Times Best Seller List. He may have one there now. Mike uses 2 levels of prototypes before publishing.

His alpha prototype: Mike tests interest in a book's concept by soliciting a national magazine like GQ to publish an abridged early version as a long article of about 7,000 words. At this point Mike has invested serious time in research and story structure but his agent hasn't yet approached a publisher. With positive feedback from the article (fingers crossed, candles burned, and Mary's hailed) and a 20-page treatise on how he'd expand it into a full book, Mike and his agent are ready to seek out a publisher. *What do you think? Yeah, it's a great story, but maybe needs a more sinister villain.*

His beta prototype: Once a publisher signs on Mike starts the arduous job of pounding through the full book, sentence by sentence, chapter by chapter. Draft chapters are shared with a few friends for honest comment and near-final drafts are sent to his agent and publisher for review. Whole chapters may still get cut, new ones added. These are just a few of the prototypes he'll share before the final manuscript is nailed down and mailed in, and by then both Mike and his publisher are confident the work is in great shape before the printers swing into action.

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Any interprize can be prototyped as a way to limit costs and get an early impression from both you and your market before committing to a final product. You just bought an old abandoned brewery? Why not experiment with different batches to share with friends before committing to bottling. (I'm typically available for this type of sampling.) Inspired to paint an oil canvas of pipe-smoking card players? Why not sketch a few studies first, then experiment with the palette before setting up that final easel? You, too, may produce one of the most admired paintings on the planet.



A prototype sketch of *The Card Players*, Paul Cezanne

### The Your Interprize Prototype Experiment:

1. With your interprize ambition clearly defined (return to previous experiments if still struggling) imagine prototypes that can be created quickly and inexpensively to approximate its core interprize value.
  - Your alpha prototype: Fashion an early trial or create a preliminary version that (1) will give you a feel for the imagined pursuit and (2) can be shared with close allies who will encourage your progress but highlight the flaws. If your interprize centers not on a product but rather an accomplished experience, perhaps to traverse the magnificent 2,600-mile Pacific Crest Trail, plan a weekend challenge such as the 24-mile Lost Coast Trail to approximate the ambition, but with little commitment in time and money.
  - Your beta prototype: Build on your alpha prototype to more closely approximate the final ambition - its taste or sound or color or story or whatever - for sharing with trusted patrons, your evangelists. To continue with our hiking example, consider a 3-4 week challenge such as the 210 mile

John Muir Trail. It will be a bigger commitment in time and money, but when pursued will provide a clearer sense of the challenges and rewards.

2. With each prototype created, experienced, and shared, ask for feedback starting with yourself. Is this interprize feeding my desires as imagined? Am I even more committed and excited by the ambition as I dive into it more deeply, experience it more richly? What can I learn from friends, allies, and patrons about these prototypes that will improve its quality and strengthen my Product-Passion Fit?
3. With this feedback in hand, return to your grand life ambition and consider pivots that are warranted. Maybe an extra verse added, or a villain made more sinister. Perhaps you're even more excited about taking on the Pacific Crest Trail but need a different tent or hiking shoes or time of year to start. What are you learning that will make your interprize more impactful and its pursuit more deeply rewarding? This is your life legacy, get it right.



## Channels & Points of Engagement

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Published originally on October 5, 2023.

An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

“An audience is not brought to you or given to you, it’s something that you fight for.”

- Bruce Springsteen

A major element of any startup’s business strategy is the channel(s) through which it promotes, sells, and supports its amazing product or service. Online, in a brick-and-mortar store, direct mail or email, through the Green Stamps catalog (okay, that’s dating me), or via another creative avenue? Will they touch end consumers directly (B2C) or to and through other businesses (B2B)? There is a myriad of channel options, each with distinctive costs and benefits. It can be challenging to get right.

We interpreneurs are not startups, but also have to think about channels. In the course of developing plans for our big dreams a key step and consideration are the avenues through which we are discovered and engaged. There is an appointed cell for channel strategy in those Life Leap Canvases we use to brainstorm and get our interprize ambitions organized (refer to our [July Experiment](#) for more on the Canvas).

What are you offering: artistic creativity, a benevolent service, a restoration project? The patrons, characteristics, and compensation of each interprize are unique and the most effective channels will likewise be distinctive and evolving (in some cases rapidly).

An example may be helpful. When considering the channels for my own grand projects - how do patrons find me, enjoy me, and maybe even pay me - there are a wealth of options.

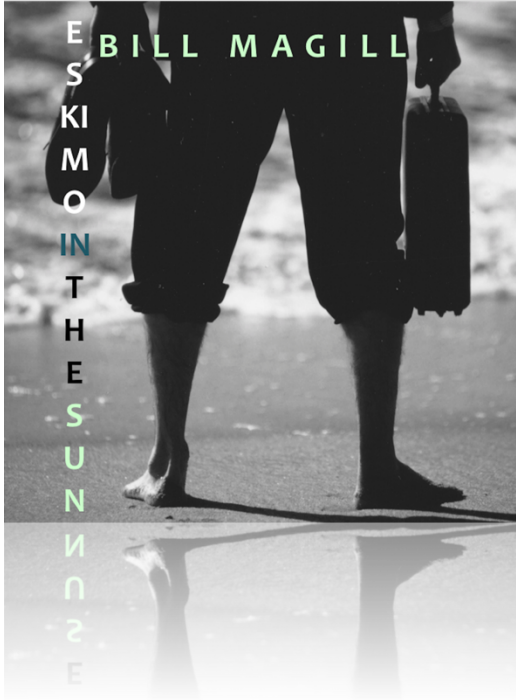
### My Music:

- *Learning about it.* Positive reviews are a good way to promote creative output. Even bad reviews will raise awareness, although most of us prefer those of the high-praise variety. I decided to work through an agency when releasing *Last Night at the Ha-Ra* in 2018, which had it reviewed by various critics, including at *RnR Magazine* and *Klef Notes* (read Kiki Skinner’s review [here](#)). Facebook and Instagram are 2 media platforms I’ve used to socialize my output. (This part of my strategy still needs a lot of work.)
- *Listening to it.* Both of my albums can be listened to on streaming services (Spotify, Apple Music, etc.), online media (Soundcloud, YouTube), and on my [billmagill.com](#) website. None of this generates direct income, which is fine. If money was a priority

I'd concentrate on live performances (plans are in work for live drama bombs, ... stay tuned!).

- *Buying it.* CDs are available on [Bandcamp](#), ... or send me a tenderly crafted, handwritten letter as to why you'd LOVE one and I'll get it into the mail for free (address below). When my album *Eskimo in the Sun* was released 25 years ago industry sales were mostly through CD and album distribution. Few people buy those anymore and most patrons (critics, agents, labels, etc.) want a link. I won't use CDs as a sales channel for my next song collection, planned for early 2024.
- *Wanting more of it.* It's important to build lasting relations with your patrons, not just one-off engagements. I drop posts on social media about projects in work, hoping to maintain a stream of awareness with fans and friends who enjoy my music. As mentioned above, I'm bad at this. I should be posting daily on different platforms with photos and links, but distractions from other Bill Magill endeavors – teaching entrepreneurship, developing a new Life Leap *summer camp* (this will be great fun!), writing the music and script for my next rock drama (it's going to be killer!), taking late-afternoon apéros with friends – get in the way. Luckily, I have Gen Z daughter who's improving this side of my game. *C'mon Dad, we need some new content!* Prescient timing there on the family planning with my ex.





Bill's albums from 1996 and 2018

My channel strategy has pivoted significantly since my first solo recordings in the early 1980s. Back then it was cassette mix tapes of Bill Magill demos handed out to friends. For my recent full theatrical musicals a radically different approach is called for, including all of the above plus live stagings, ... and that demands an entire strategy of its own. As I said, every interprize channel strategy calls for bespoke noodling on the most effective paths to touch your public, which will likely require constant tweaking.

### **The Channels Experiment:**

1. Revisit your work from earlier experiments regarding: your grand legacy ambition (your interprize); the North Star (your Mission) guiding all those interpreneurial plans and efforts; your gift that it illuminates and leads; and the patrons most appreciative of that gift.
2. Identify all channel options for connecting your gift to these patrons. Include the channels that help them:
  - Find you.

- Consume or enjoy your gift.
- Compensate you (monetarily or in other forms).
- Continue their interest and patronage.

As with all experiments it's important to run through your first framing of a channel strategy (consider it Channel Strategy v1.0), then leave it be and walk away, give it some more thought when out and about, and return to it through the week and strengthen with v2.0 or more. This process may also prod reconsiderations of those other elements of your interprize plan we've touched on in earlier experiments. That's a good thing.

*Oh, .... and if you want one of those CDs as mentioned above, mail that handwritten note to:*

Bill Magill  
7 rue Manuel  
13100 Aix-en-Provence  
France



## Preparing to Launch

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Published originally on November 16, 2023.

An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

“Opportunities are never lost; they go to someone who’s awake and ready to host them attentively.”

— Vincent Okay Nwachukwu

Our experiments to date have focused on your interprize – that grand legacy ambition that fills you with a deep sense of purpose – and how to get it imagined, defined, framed, improved, and pursued with great zest and resilience. In this experiment we will talk about timing. More specifically, along that long arc from *sounds like a cool idea* to *wahoo, break out the champagne!*, where are you now along the journey? Once launched how do you continue to push forward and measure progress? Onward!

### Stages of Launch

I first got interested in the concepts of life change and purpose while taking extended-learning night courses at San Francisco State University about 15 years ago. The program was called Core Strengths Coaching and one series of classes was led by Joe Murphy on the topic of behavioral change and timing. Giving up bad habits, changing careers, working through relationship challenges, packing up and moving across the planet. These require a lot of energy, commitment, and planning, and so does the serious pursuit of grand life ambitions.

Professor Murphy emphasized the importance of identifying one’s current stage of change so that the chances of advancing, and not suffering relapses along the way, are maximized. He delineated about a dozen stages that I distilled down to 6, each with unique markers of achievement, needs, and risk.

Here are our 6 stages of interprize launch, with links to related experiments we’ve been running this year:

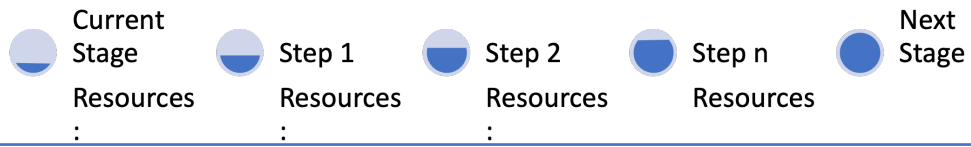
1. Pre-contemplation: Do I want to pursue a grand (dare we say audacious!) life ambition?
  - What are the self-doubts, bad habits, and other *personal gremlins* that are making me unsure?
  - Helpful tool: The Wheel of Life. ([Experiment #1](#)).

2. Contemplation: What would this pursuit look like?
  - Write a vivid description of your big dream (and enhance it with other media: personal photos, magazine pictures, music, etc.) and draft a comparison of the costs and benefits.
  - Helpful tools: Your Eulogy, First Draft ([Experiment #2](#)) and Mission Definition ([Experiment #3](#)).
3. Preparation: What do I need to get ready?
  - Work through your interprize model.
  - Helpful tools: Identifying your IP ([Experiment #4](#)) and the Life Leap Canvas ([Experiment #7](#)).
4. Launch: How do I hit the starter gun?
  - Implement your plan, develop your interprize, express your brand, and make commitments.
  - Helpful tools: In addition to the Canvas mentioned above, developing prototypes ([Experiment #9](#)) and expressing your brand ([Experiment #6](#)).
5. Improve: Now that I'm out there, how do I continuously improve my interprize?
  - Validate your legacy ambitions with key stakeholders (starting with yourself, continuously) and iterate changes where necessary. Don't resist radical pivots if needed.
  - Helpful tool: The Product-Passion Fit templates ([Experiment #5](#)).
6. Rebound: How do I overcome the setbacks, discouragement, and fatigue?
  - Adopt a regime of emotional and physical resilience.
  - Keep a community of fellow interpreneurs (suffering through similar challenges) and supporters.
  - Helpful tool: embracing the Trinity of Strengths ([Experiment #7](#)).

### **The Stages of Launch Experiment:**

Regarding the pursuit of your grand ambition, your interprize:

1. Identify the stage of launch you are at currently, referring to the 6 stages outlined above.
2. List (at least) 3 definitive steps you can undertake now to advance to the next stage. Refer to tools from previous experiments, as highlighted, if helpful.
3. Identify additional resources that will help achieve these steps. Consider:
  - additional instruction or training.
  - more practice to elevate your skill level.
  - more money or other financial support.
  - additional key equipment.
  - support staff who can cover the holes in your plan.
  - any other resources key to advancing your interprize pursuit.
4. Create a visual time map as illustrated below, listing your stage and resources needed.
5. As with earlier experiments, work through the experiment, then walk away for an hour or a day. Revisit your work afterward when in different states of mind and update as required.




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Instruction

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Practice

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Money

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Equipment

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Team

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Other

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Interprize Time Map





## Unveiling with Clarity and Conviction

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Published originally on December 5, 2023.

An audio version of this experiment is available at Substack [here](#).

“Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become. Your vision is the promise of what you shall one day be; your ideal is the prophecy of what you shall at last unveil.”

- James Allen

So here we are, the end of the year. If you’ve been following this series since January and running the experiments month by month (bravo!), you should have a good start on:

- finding your *WHAT’S NEXT?* interprize (a grand, dare we say audacious, legacy ambition of deep personal meaning, Experiments [1](#) and [2](#)),
- identifying the resources needed to pursue it effectively (Experiment [4](#)),
- optimizing its concept design to maximize your passion for the project (Experiment [5](#)),
- conjuring an authentic, powerful brand (Experiment [6](#)),
- developing early prototypes for feedback from allies (Experiment [7](#)),
- selecting the most effective channel to touch patrons (Experiment [10](#)),
- drawing out a timeline to interprize launch (Experiment [11](#)),
- and adopting a regime of balance to keep you resilient, energized, and motivated (Experiment [8](#)).

That’s a lot, but there’s one final consideration: your interprize reveal.

Startups need a *pitch*: a concise statement – understandable, irrefutable, and irresistible – that captures the appeal of their concept in under 60 seconds. The pitch is a powerful statement, invaluable in those unanticipated situations – perhaps standing in an elevator or waiting for a coffee – when the aspiring entrepreneur realizes *that person right there* is a big investor, targeted customer, or key hire who can take their startup to the next level. Okay, 3 deep breaths, calm the nerves, ... *oh, hey aren’t you...?*

The entrepreneur’s elevator pitch is at its core a short story; very short. Interpreneurs need a story too. You may or may not be seeking investors. You may or may not be seeking

customers in the traditional sense. But there is an audience eager for your interprize. Seek them out, tell them your story, and share your gift.



The greatest value of any pursuit is unlocked when shared with the world. Yours may not yet be launched and may never be fully realized. And that's okay. Your dogged commitment to pursuing this defining ambition will inspire others. (Note that 9 out of 10 startups fail, yet through my 25 years in the world of entrepreneurship I've never, ever met a founder who's regretted making that effort. Most are planning their next venture while standing on the grave their former dream.)

### **The Unveiling Experiment:**

1. Firstly, enjoy this final experiment, find delight in running it. The story of your greatest ambition should be one that thrills you to write and excites you to share. If you're not getting a tingle reading that, maybe you need to reconsider the ambition?
2. Create 2 lists of short, bulleted responses to these questions:
  - How will you be fulfilled by the pursuit of this grand ambition, your interprize? This list should explain the big question WHY.
  - What value will your patrons/customers/admirers gain from the pursuit of this grand ambition? This list should explain the big question WHAT.

3. Driving off these 2 lists, write a short story that you can deliver in 60 seconds or less (our attention spans are short these days!) that explains in vivid terms what your interprize is and why it's important, both to your patrons and yourself.
4. Is the story consistent with your Mission? Will it help optimize your Wheel of Life and contribute to the eulogy you want delivered? Is the story on brand? Is it drawing on your resources and delivering real value to those you serve? Revisit earlier experiments if you're not convinced, then redo the story.
5. As with all earlier experiments, walk away from your work for an hour and then a day, and return when in different moods and changes in sunlight. Tweak and optimize as needed.
6. Now, when will you be ready to tell your story to others, to unveil your interprize? The November experiment on launch timing will help. Maybe you're eager now, maybe you prefer to remain in stealth mode until your confidence and comfort are higher. Set a date and commit to it.
7. Finally, who will hear your interprize pitch? Perhaps you've already been sending up trial balloons about this or that project you've been considering. Now that you're serious, committed, and ready to share, who will be the lucky audience?

With the workshops I run on startup creation the afternoon of the final day is always reserved for a pitching competition amongst the teams. It's their time to shine: what's the brilliant innovation and its go-to-market strategy? Teams tend to start with a short, compelling elevator pitch to set the hook, then delve into the details.

Our Life Leap Workshops also finish with big reveals. It's your *I Have a Dream* moment about what's next and everyone is at the edge of their seats. This is my bold life ambition, my interprize, this is why it fills me with so much passion, and this is how I'm going to pursue it. Sharing this, being on record for that vision and commitment, will be an exhilarating start to next leap in your life. Now it's time. Let's go!



## Acknowledgements

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A special thanks to the stunningly beautiful region of Provence, France and its many colorful inhabitants. You've shaped my thinking on life's priorities and given my escape a warm welcome and soft landing. Also to my 3 children: Jess, Stella, and Shane, who have followed Dad across oceans and continents, suffered my Quixotic wanderings, and forgone many little luxuries with great patience and good humor.

## Biographical Note

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A reformed Silicon Valley venture investor, Bill Magill now enjoys a simple, bountiful life in Provence, France. He is fascinated with the notions of self-realization and how we flourish; of personal worth as opposed to acquired wealth.

The concepts of interpreneurship offered in this manual are shaped by Bill's many years of experience supporting emerging companies on 3 continents, first as a Wall Street analyst and venture capitalist, and now as a visiting professor of entrepreneurship at the INSEAD business school near Paris. Principles adapted from new venture creation are coupled with the emerging concepts of positive psychology, wellness, and self-realization to form the core of interpreneurship: the pursuit of grand legacy ambitions of deep personal meaning.

Bill has pursued numerous interpreneurial activities himself since moving to Provence in 2010. In addition to founding the Interprize Group and leading Life Leap Workshops in Europe and the US, he has been publishing a series of essays on *what truly matters* in life – *Postcards from a Runaway* – since 2011. Collections of these essays are being compiled and republished now. A second album of original music – *Last Night at the Ha Ra* – was released in 2018. A full [radio theatre adaption](#) of the album was released in 2020, based on a script Bill finished that year. More books, music, and theatre projects are in development and made available at his personal website [here](#).