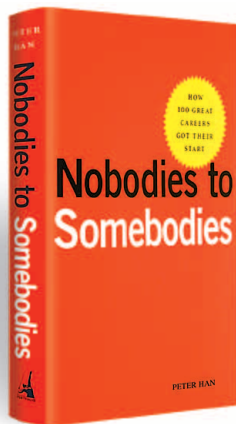


# SOUNDVIEW Executive Book Summaries®

FILE: SUCCESS/  
CAREER TECHNIQUES

By Peter Han

## How 100 Great Careers Got Their Start

# NOBODIES TO SOMEBODIES

### THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Novelist Tom Clancy was an insurance agent well into his 40s. He sold his first novel for a pittance to a little-known publisher. Today he's one of the world's most popular authors.

Clancy and many other successful people were once just ordinary Nobodies with talent but little or no experience. They had career interests but few clear goals. They wanted to find work that would be financially rewarding and personally fulfilling — but didn't know how. And they had to overcome all the uncertainty and obstacles of being Nobodies.

This summary explores how many successful people found their true callings in a wide range of fields, and went from Nobodies to Somebodies. Based on interviews with 100 highly accomplished leaders — actors, CEOs, senators, scientists and others — this summary describes the early paths they traveled, the hard choices they made, and the lessons they learned along the way. This summary is also filled with stories of seized opportunity and realized potential, surprising choices and staggering successes. Describing many extremely diverse career paths, it explores common themes and lessons that can help anyone eager to start a satisfying career.

In addition, readers will discover the answers to these questions:

✓ **How did those 100 leaders choose their professional paths and think of their first jobs?** Learn how they worried less about one key formula to discover their destiny — and more about how to be themselves, how to find themselves, and how to translate knowledge of their identity into fruitful work.

✓ **Do leaders experience doubt and insecurity?** Discover how they used their insecurities and inexperience as extra motivation to spur them to action.

✓ **Did Somebodies start out believing they could achieve anything?** Find out how the ability to find confidence, which in turn fostered ambition, marked them for success.

✓ **Did the 100 Somebodies develop a positive outlook because others treated them well — or treat others well because of their own positive outlook?** Learn how it was a little of both. Leaders often have friendly, even magnetic, personalities, which multiply their positive interactions with others, and those experiences reinforce their sociable natures in an ever-repeating virtuous cycle.

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# NOBODIES TO SOMEBODIES

by Peter Han

## — THE COMPLETE SUMMARY

### Five Paths to Enlightenment

Among the 100 Somebodies who were interviewed, there were five methods for self-discovery, depending on how much freedom an individual had in taking a first job, the extent to which he or she believed in one clear professional destiny (versus several options), and the degree to which he or she managed career development. These methods are:

**1. Random Walk** involves no aggressive, purposeful search for meaning. Those who found their calling this way benefited from luck and, while talented and passionate, did not start their first jobs with anxiety about their careers.

**2. Open-Ended Exploration** means more openness to the possibility that you are meant to do one particular thing.

**3. Closed-Ended Exploration** means beginning a first job with specific aims. Leaders who discovered themselves this way started with a fairly clear idea of their ambitions, wants, needs and passions. They often evaluated potential career paths via specific criteria.

**4. Killer Excellence After Expedience.** Many leaders began their careers with choices determined by expedience, usually financial or familial. They started with mundane jobs but displayed strong competence and boosted themselves into positions of steadily ascending responsibility.

**5. Trailblazing** leaders were the individuals least willing to fit themselves to conventional career paths. They really wanted to find work that suited them, and created new jobs, companies, or market niches for themselves. ■

### Run Toward Yourself, Not Away

How did the 100 leaders practice self-discovery and identity formation? Here are seven ways they did it:

● **Strong Self-Awareness.** They often started their careers — and made decisions about their careers — with significant self-knowledge, stemming from instinct or introspection. Their understanding of their own likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses were particularly insightful.

Senator Bill Bradley did a variety of things during the off-seasons of his NBA career, including advertising, politics and writing. He advises, “Develop your self-knowledge so that you’re doing something you really want to do and not because other people thought you should do it.”

The 100 Somebodies gained independence from their

initial preconceptions about life and work, ideas that may have been instilled by parents or early childhood experiences. Rather than relying automatically on advice and direction from others, they made sure that their work fit them and their individual tastes.

● **Play Toward Strengths and Away From Weaknesses.** The Somebodies were able to put their egos aside and see themselves clearly enough to know what they are not good at — and leverage their strengths. They weren’t afraid to develop lopsided capabilities to gain a competitive advantage.

● **Authenticity and Integrity.** “Authenticity” is alignment between your underlying character and your statements and actions. “Integrity” is the consistency of those words and deeds, from one day to another and across different situations. You must be in touch with yourself, and you must be yourself, because if you’re not, it will be immediately obvious to everyone around you.

● **Pragmatic Decision-Making Processes.** Some of the Somebodies made very rapid career decisions; others took much longer to navigate a key crossroads. But many relied on gut instinct — on trusting themselves and not getting overly bogged down in analyzing the pros and cons of every possible contingency. This instinct rested on strong self-knowledge.

*Leaders aren’t necessarily faster or slower or more logical than average people in their decision-making.*

*Leaders’ decision-making stands out due to three factors: their clarity of self-knowledge; their tendency to act decisively once decisions are made; and their ability to con-*

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### Run Toward Yourself, Not Away

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*duct internal dialogues, continually assimilating new information and ideas from the wider world.*

● **Pay the Rent First, Conquer the World Later.** When the Somebodies were Nobodies, their egos weren't inflated by mystical confidence and grandiose visions. They did not start their first jobs with detailed maps to the top. They thought about paying the bills and perhaps starting to save; they were laying the foundations of their lives, without necessarily knowing how the full blueprint would look.

Many had nursed quiet but intense hopes, clear glimmers of ambition, as they took their first jobs. But those dreams had to compete with more immediate concerns. Idleness was not an option; their families weren't affluent enough for them to spend time deciding what they wanted to be when they grew up.

● **Coping With Insecurities — and Using Them for Motivation.** The 100 leaders, like so many of us, had to cope with basic insecurities and inexperience. They truly were Nobodies and did not sail through work and life without doubts. Many shared stories of early uncertainty; anxiety before big meetings; and hard, lonely work.

Years before he won the Nobel Prize, English cancer researcher Paul Nurse had to fight off depression and low motivation — so much so that he contemplated other careers. But his colleagues helped get him through.

Leaders do have their periods of doubt and insecurity, but they get past them. Some use their insecurities and inexperience as extra motivation to spur them to action.

● **From Paying Rent to Conquering the World.** Even with the pressures of day-to-day responsibilities and bills, the Somebodies didn't completely abandon their dreams and hopes. At work, they often spotted opportunities — or created them for themselves — and jumped on them. Some admitted to simply being ignorant because of their inexperience; not knowing the conventional wisdom, they could ignore it. ■

### Become the Big Fish by Mastering the Small Pond

How did leaders gain the confidence to raise their sights?

When Pulitzer Prize-winner Alan Miller was a reporter covering a small suburb of Albany, N.Y., an editor told him, "One day you will cover Moscow better than anyone else because today you've covered Colonie better than anyone."

The confidence to achieve great things springs from successful achievement of smaller tasks. Confidence is a delicate thing — even for the most accomplished leaders, it can be fleeting and difficult to maintain in the face of the world's indifference or outright rejection.

It's critically important to success, yet elusive — particularly for people just starting their careers. The 100 Somebodies didn't start their first jobs with the belief that they could achieve anything. Rather, what marked them for success was the ability to find confidence, which in turn fostered the ambition. The basic pattern was the same: Achieve small successes in local settings, then use the knowledge, contacts and confidence from those experiences to replicate successes on a broader scale.

Many of the 100 Somebodies remembered their first jobs vividly. Years or even decades later, they recall seemingly unimportant events, conversations and people who influenced their crucial first steps and prepared them for future success. With the confidence gained from those early jobs, they had the strength to follow their intuitions instead of conventional wisdom — to make moves, to advance their new ideas, and to fight for their beliefs. It was this steady, quiet, but often fierce confidence in the face of adversity that truly built their careers and got them through difficult career transitions.

Some of the leaders said that their success came from a natural optimism and self-confidence. But most needed to become big fish by swimming in small ponds. ■

For additional information on an inspirational quote from former Texas Governor Ann Richards, go to: <http://my.summary.com>

### Learn When to Stay and When to Go

What career moves did the Somebodies make, and why?

They loved their work first and foremost, and didn't particularly relish fancy career maneuvers among jobs or organizations. But they did develop the following savvy ways to manage their career development:

● **Patience — or Lack Thereof.** The Somebodies were patient in their approaches to their first jobs. Some left within a couple of months when the job was obviously a poor fit. But many stayed longer, even for decades.

Some were quite aware of their progress relative to typical milestones of age. Others didn't feel the need to agitate for promotion or new types of work, as their careers naturally evolved on their own.

Keyspan CEO Bob Catell worked at Brooklyn Union for 15 years before he became an officer. But he says that he was "enjoying every job. One of the basic principles I tried to follow in every job I had was to do the best I could in that job. I also never really worried about the politics. I figured if I did a good job, that would be recognized, and that would provide an opportunity for advancement."

Although not all leaders are blessed with natural patience, a number of them learned to cultivate it.

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### Learn When to Stay and When to Go

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● **Varying Tenure at a First Job.** Some of the 100 leaders committed to a job or company for at least five and often more than 10 years. Earning the helm of a large corporate enterprise or government institution requires specific knowledge and contacts, and a personal gravity built only through repeated demonstration of competence over time.

In certain fields, such as arts and entertainment or to a lesser degree science, leaders often had more career mobility: When opportunity knocked, they answered. And in business, when people stayed put, it was usually because their jobs had morphed into virtually new roles.

It was rare to find leaders who had simply dedicated themselves to a particular job or institution and never wavered from their initial paths. The key to longevity was rotation through different roles. The chance to try new activities and to learn new skills kept the future Somebodies interested and engaged.

#### **What Compelled Departure From First Jobs?**

Despite valuable lessons learned in those early jobs, the most common reason for departure was limited opportunity for advancement and professional growth.

Symbol Technologies CEO Bill Nuti left the security of a career at IBM — a difficult decision — to develop more rapidly at another company.

A common element in career moves was a hunger for excellence, which became part of the Somebodies' identities and motivated them to overcome obstacles. ■

### Learn How to Stay and How to Go

What kinds of moves did top achievers make?

Actor John Lithgow left his father's small theater company for the ultra-competitive marketplace of New York. Like other leaders, he sought visibility, broad functional expertise, and positions that would stretch his capabilities rather than simply being good "résumé builders." Above all, he was thoughtful and made conscious trade-offs in an effort to reach his goals.

● **Raising Professional Visibility.** Leaders often showed a knack for getting noticed early in their careers and using the extra visibility to learn about or create new opportunities for themselves.

But not all visibility stemmed directly from work. Curt Culver, now CEO of MGIC, started his career at a smaller mortgage insurance company and gained extra exposure to the CEO on the golf course because he'd been a competitive collegiate golfer.

● **Cultivation of Broad Functional Expertise.** Fortune 100 CEOs often pointed to cross-functional perspective as a key aim of early jobs.

Kirk Thompson, the CEO of trucking company JB Hunt, joined the company for his first job when it was much smaller. His skills grew with the company. He says, "[T]he fact that I'd done so many different things [in growing the company] broadened my perspective and allowed me to be, I think, more ready and prepared for the CEO job, as opposed to somebody who was in a single-line trajectory."

Of course, the lessons from cross-functional learning weren't always easy. Staples CEO Ron Sargent worked at Kroger's grocery company after getting a Harvard MBA, and spent time cutting up meat in a frigid meat department.

● **Stretching Capabilities, Even If It Means Sacrificing Some Glamour.** The 100 Somebodies often chose roles that offered high growth, even at the expense of high glamour. They recognized the need to expand their capabilities and shouldered unusual responsibilities.

In business, this often means starting at line positions. Direct responsibility for a specific segment of a business breeds accountability and strategic thinking in a way that a staff position cannot.

Many business leaders specifically sought line management experience. Future Raytheon CEO Daniel Burnham did this, and even took a \$20,000 pay cut.

● **Conscious Management of Career Moves.** Some of the 100 relied on sustained, strong performance, with faith in mentors and meritocracy. A few others saw their career in terms of free spirit, intense passions and lucky breaks. But most acknowledged some level of conscious planning.

They didn't practice precise, structured career planning. Life is too unpredictable. They had a general awareness of their career goals — and a hope of fulfilling them — but they didn't know how close they would actually come.

Many leaders achieved visibility within their organizations or fields, developed versatility in their roles, challenged themselves with capacity-stretching jobs, and made thoughtful career choices. But thoughtfulness shouldn't be confused with risk aversion. The Somebodies didn't always take the preset, obvious, well-beaten path — far from it. They displayed an impressive flexibility early in their careers — an ability to read situations, react to them, and change paths as opportunity rose or fell. ■

### Don't Let Old Plans Get in the Way of New Opportunities — or Luck

Many of the 100 had stories of jumping off the beaten track to try fortuitous new possibilities. They were neither risk-averse nor swashbuckling. But they had a good sense of when and how to take risks. Sometimes they considered it a risk not to try something new. Others had a casual openness to new possibilities.

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### Listening to Inner Voices and Intuitions; Following Dreams

Felix Zandman, the CEO of Vishay Intertechnology, wanted to start a company around an industrial technology he'd created in his spare time: "I quit a very important job ... And I went on my own! So it was just an internal feeling that I [had] invented something important, and I felt that I had to do it."

Whether through inner intuitions or more obvious external stimuli, leaders learned from their experiences — and adjusted their behavior. They frequently found success by adjusting to new, unexpected paths.

### Don't Let Old Plans Get in the Way of New Opportunities — or Luck

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Many of the Somebodies' best moments came from reacting to the unexpected. Chemist Harold Kroto, who won a Nobel Prize though he never consciously sought it, says, "I do the sort of science that interests me. I think if you do that, and do the work to the very best of your ability, the serendipity will take care of itself."

While the Somebodies did enjoy interesting opportunities and to some degree good luck, they also, at critical junctures, made decisions that were *right for them*, even if those decisions contradicted conventional wisdom. ■

For additional information on a quote on risk by UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy, go to: <http://my.summary.com>

### Work Hard, Work Smart, And Work Some More

All of the 100 Somebodies have a huge appetite for work and hands-on experience. Not all of them chose their hard-won experience. Some were pushed into situations that demanded action and difficult effort. But they responded to the opportunities and worked hard at pursuing them. Here are the different aspects of their orientation to action:

● **Once Decisions Are Made, Decisive Action.** The leaders described an impressive capacity to throw overwhelming resources and attention — everything they had, essentially — at the challenge.

● **Sheer Relentlessness and Dogged Work Ethic.** After a long career and three Pulitzer Prizes, photographer William Snyder says, "Most people in my business ... obviously the intelligence is there. But the thing that separates people who are successful from people who are not successful or are not that successful, is just the ability and the desire to work that much harder, and to make appropriate sacrifices. I sacrificed a lot of things."

● **Smart Work — Recognizing Key Moments, and**

**Seizing Initiative.** Many of the 100 told how they recognized key moments and rose to the challenge by working smart — through extensive preparation, the ability to relax under pressure, or simply better execution and stronger will — or seizing the initiative by working at self-created tasks that solved pressing problems.

Journalist Bill Dietrich explains that he had to complete what turned out to be an award-winning series, on his own time, because his editor wasn't interested.

● **Excellence in the Task at Hand.** Says Senator Chuck Hagel: "[D]on't paralyze yourself by planning too far out. I've seen too many people make too many mistakes tripping over what's in front of them now, by reaching too far, and thinking too much about future and consequences. I've always believed that you should enjoy as much as you can what you're doing today, and if you do enjoy it, you believe you're doing something that's worthy, and you're doing it the best you can, the future always takes care of itself. Life connects. The thing that you're doing at that time puts you in a certain universe — that's a universe of contacts, of relationships, of awareness, of knowledge. That always comes together in a way that presents opportunity." ■

### Be Productively Competitive

Somebodies almost always have a strong drive to be the best in their field. Sometimes that drive is triggered by a minor event, such as when former Raytheon CEO Daniel Burnham discovered that a colleague at his level was making \$100 more each month than he was making.

Competitiveness can appear as a desire for independence from the whims of others, as with Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Deborah Blum. Tired of having her assignments dictated by others, she returned to graduate school to get her master's degree and give her career a new direction.

Somebodies have mental compasses that point upward. They weren't necessarily egotistical in an offensive way, but they used their pride to push themselves to do better and to reach higher. ■

### Find the Social Animal Within

Almost all of the 100 Somebodies, whether introverted or extroverted, benefited from relationships.

Most were outgoing people who engaged others easily and often. Even in more solitary fields like science, the arts and entertainment, achievers gained great benefit from their ability to teach others, to be taught, to communicate clearly, and to establish relationships of trust and caring.

Their good cheer and enjoyment of relationships is genuine, not a disguise for political advantage. Says scientist Rich Roberts, "If you yourself are prepared to be cooperative and helpful, it brings out the best in other people."

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### Find the Social Animal Within

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Did the 100 Somebodies develop a positive outlook because others treated them well — or treat others well because of their own positive outlook? A little of both. Leaders often have friendly, even magnetic, personalities, which multiplied their positive interactions with others, and those experiences reinforce their sociable natures in an ever-repeating virtuous cycle. Whether for intellectual stimulation, job referrals, competitive inspiration, or other social support, the Somebodies depended heavily on relationships. This dependence may explain why so many understood the importance of a cooperative approach to persuasion, as opposed to the command-and-control model. There are four ways they performed their relationship magic.

**1. The Common Touch, or Likability.** During interviews, the 100 Somebodies typically came off as remarkably humble, approachable and friendly.

#### *‘You Treat People Right’*

Says Daniel Burnham, the former CEO of Raytheon, “The people you’re working with may not have graduate degrees, but I look at them, and I see my mother, my cousins, my friends growing up. I think they’re regular people. I treat them all the same. Not because I’m trying to manipulate them, but because that’s the way to lead: You treat people right, treat them fairly, and most of them will respond and push toward goals.”

**2. Reciprocity.** The Somebodies consistently practiced the proverbial Golden Rule, treating others as they would want to be treated. They would go the extra mile for others, and others would respond with extra effort for them.

**3. Communications Skills.** The Somebodies were able to express their thoughts effectively, orally or in writing, even in less obviously social fields such as science. If public speaking did not come naturally to them, they acquired the necessary skills in order to focus people’s attention on important priorities and to build acceptance for their ideas.

**4. Savvy With Organizational Behavior and Politics.** Political savvy includes several qualities in different contexts: sensitivity to others’ feelings, awareness of who really controlled particular decisions, and intuition about which points would be most persuasive to different stakeholders in a given argument.

The 100 leaders understood how to move others by effective-

“I had this horse who could not stand to have anyone in front of him. ... [Y]ou would just walk up alongside of him, and he’d take off running. I love that attitude. That’s kind of the way I am. I don’t like to be in the pack. I want to be out front. ... I like leading.”

*Jim Hagedorn,  
CEO of Scotts Co.*

ly employing communications, reciprocity and person-ability at the right times. Even those who are uncomfortable with office politics came to understand how their working environment was structured — and how opportunities fall to some and not others.

#### *Relationship to Institutions*

Not all leaders embraced institutions wholeheartedly. Writers such as Tom Hallman and Paul Salopek did not invest themselves in climbing organizational ladders. Even a consummate business and government insider like Bill Ruckelshaus avoided entering business early in his career precisely because he saw many of the same disadvantages to the professional rat race that today’s young people do. Ruckelshaus says, “[I]nstitutions are no better or worse than the people that run them.”

Others also expressed a fundamental pragmatism. Former Congressman and Cabinet Secretary Dan Glickman admits that “the longer I was [in Congress], the more I became part of the system. [W]hen you’re part of an institution for a very long period of time, to be effective, you have to go along periodically.”

Institutions help career development by acting as talent magnets. They attract a wide variety of people and allow them to interact, work together and grow together. As the 100 Nobodies became Somebodies, they often became part of mutually helpful groups of like-minded others. Institutions helped them find those groups.

Institutions also helped by conferring credentials, a kind of institutional pedigree that introduces potential Somebodies to future audiences.

And institutions teach certain philosophies or methods of work that the organization has developed successfully. Paul Norris, CEO of WR Grace, learned management theory under Larry Bossidy, himself a GE disciple.

Thus, institutions can help a young person’s career more than he or she might realize, especially by facilitating important relationships. ■

### Keep Learning, No Matter Who the Teacher Is

The 100 Somebodies were unusually good at finding, cultivating and learning from mentors who helped them avoid the pitfalls of early career growth. With few exceptions, they did not maintain lifelong mentors but took counsel from many situational teachers. Some acknowledged that tying oneself too closely to one mentor either limited independent development or promoted office politicking.

They also learned from negative role models, including bosses and colleagues with whom there were serious personality clashes. ■

## Go Crazy in the Office, But Stay Sane at Home

Most — but not all — of the 100 Somebodies worked extremely hard early in their careers, sacrificing balance to productivity and achievement. Some indicated that

“[T]here is a lot of office politics. There always is. I think that was my rudest awakening in the work world, to be honest with you. It wasn’t just about who has the best idea or who’s working the hardest. I mean, things weren’t just based on merit, you know? You had to schmooze the right person.”

April Saul,  
Pulitzer  
Prize-winning  
photographer

imbalance continued to the present day — but of this group, some contended that their “lack of balance” by other people’s standards fit nicely with their own personal tastes and values.

Others actually had maintained balance in their lives — and outlined specific ways in which they became more effective professionally when they devoted time and attention to nonwork activities.

Although they had a wide array of opinions on work-life balance, the underlying commonality was an uncompromising work ethic in their early jobs.

Most relied on coping mechanisms that generally fell into the following four categories:

**1. Relying on Spouse.** A strikingly high number of male

Somebodies mentioned their spouses in glowing terms, pointed to them as bedrocks of stability, and generally showed a heavy reliance on them for emotional and career support. A high percentage had remained with their original partners, or at least had been in marriages stretching multiple decades. Many told wholesome stories of romance and of marrying their school-age sweethearts.

**2. Preserving Family Rituals and Activities.**

Another way to promote work-life balance was to create and/or preserve family rituals, especially attendance at key events in their children’s lives.

**3. Sacrificing Nonfamily Activities.** The 100 Somebodies also reduced nonfamily socializing and leisure, giving up sports, or becoming extremely compartmentalized and efficient. AutoZone CEO Steve Odland to this day avoids scheduling business meetings in the evening, and makes other sacrifices with his wife to improve the quality of their lives with their children.

**4. Recognizing the Benefits of Balance.** Recognizing the necessity of balance actually helps to maintain it. For the Somebodies, it offers psychological comfort, essential grounding to their lives, and, in some cases, an empathy to human experiences and feelings that was essential to productive work. Photographer William Snyder notes that “if you don’t have your own life, if

you don’t have something away from work, you’re not going to be able to do your work as well. You’re not going to be able to be successful.” ■

## Willpower and Passion

The magic ingredient in the recipe for success of the 100 Somebodies is a burning intensity. They all had an abundance of sheer willpower — the ability to focus and to translate determination to action — and a positive energy that appeared as passion or optimism.

Willpower and passion disrupt the simple equation between inputs and outputs — and somehow produce something from nothing. Says Senator Chuck Hagel, “[O]ne thing I am sure of the older I get is that individuals can talk themselves into anything, and they can talk themselves out of anything. The human mind is a powerful, powerful dynamic ...”

Not only were the 100 Somebodies unusually skilled in finding ways around obstacles — their desire to succeed helped them *identify* those obstacles. Rarely did they waste their attention and energy on trivial goals. Typically, through instinct, they realized the importance of tackling larger problems and not settling for easy paths.

They positioned themselves in front of opportunity by focusing on the difficult problems and issues in their field or organization.

● **The American Dream.** Many of the leaders unabashedly expressed their love of America and its value system. Several specifically mentioned the American Dream and their confidence in the overall system by which this country runs. Many told stories of humble starts in life, followed by self-improvement through education.

Besides living the fundamentals of honesty, fair play, hard work, and high ambition, the leaders consciously trusted the basic system of cause-and-effect, effort-and-reward that runs our society.

● **Passion for Subject Matter.** Almost all of the leaders reported a very strong attraction to the simple experience of what they were doing. This enjoyment, not the accolades, was what drove them to their achievements.

Grammy-winning songwriter Tia Sillers says, “Just give me a guitar and a pen, and I’m happy. Music gives me meaning in life.”

● **Passion for Intense Experiences in Their Own Right.** Many of the Somebodies described intense feelings

“Beyond my own admitted ‘workaholicism’ anyone who is successful in life knows that it takes an incredible amount of work and many sacrifices along the way. There is no free lunch in life. I do my best to balance.”

William Nuti,  
CEO of Symbol  
Technologies

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If you liked *Nobodies to Somebodies*, you'll also like:

1. ***Good to Great* by Jim Collins.** Collins used strict benchmarks to identify a group of 11 elite companies that made the leap from good to great and sustained that greatness for at least 15 years.
2. ***Leading Quietly* by Joseph L. Badaracco Jr.** Badaracco studies and celebrates successful low-profile leaders.
3. ***Comeback* by Martin Puris.** Editor Puris offers the stories of eight top executives, including Robert Louis-Dreyfus of sportswear firm Adidas, and Eckard Pfeiffer of Compaq Computer Corp., who turned their companies around.
4. ***What Really Works* by William Joyce, Nitin Nohria and Bruce Roberson.** The authors describe the results of a 10-year study that turned 50 academics and business consultants loose on dozens of companies, to find out what really works.
5. ***Maximum Leadership* by Charles M. Farkas and Philippe De Backer.** The authors interviewed CEOs the world over with one goal in mind: To discover how they add value to their companies.

### Willpower and Passion

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or experiences that they'd had, and their thirst for the intensity itself. They enjoyed something inherent in their work and in their own reactions to those experiences that called out their passions and consumed their energy and attention.

Kathleen Ligocki, now CEO of Tower Automotive, took her first lengthy job at a General Motors plant when she was still in her 20s. She says, "[I]t was such an exciting situation — 5,000 people in a closed environment, responsible for producing over a million parts a year. It was just very intense, very exciting. ... To be honest, I fell in love with the work the first day I walked into the plant."

● **Passion for Ideals.** Millard Fuller, founder of Habitat for Humanity, speaks of a magical energy and life force that drive him to do philanthropic work: He gave away almost all of his money before he started Habitat for Humanity. Other leaders were motivated by religion, concern for the environment, or the general idealism of the 1960s.

● **Positive Approach to Life.** The Somebodies' willpower and passions made them very positive people. They drove hard for their goals, had high ambitions, and were passionate about their lives. This fundamentally forward-leaning posture influenced everything they did.

The effect of a positive outlook was not to ignore reality and float through life in a heedlessly happy bubble, but rather to sustain strong self-confidence. Writer Michael Vitez, referring to a difficult choice between two jobs, says, "I believe life would have been exciting and rewarding whichever path I had taken, because I was optimistic and enthusiastic and had a good attitude." ■

### Things Don't Have to End Where They Begin

The Somebodies believe that life is an organic, change-filled process, constantly dynamic, and things rarely end where they began. Personal and professional growth was part of each Somebody's story about his or her early career.

● **Adaptability and Self-Improvement.** After a strong career start, the Somebodies continued to build their skills and reputations by adapting to environmental change (responding to some elements of their company, industry or profession) and initiating change in themselves via an expansion of skills or other personal growth.

● **Intellectual Curiosity.** Another factor in the Somebodies' ability for self-improvement was the mental stimulation and problem-solving that came with work.

● **Failure.** Many of the top achievers failed early in their careers. Failure forced them to recognize the need for change and to react accordingly. They didn't necessarily make better short-term decisions than average people — or

fewer mistakes. They did grow from their mistakes more than the average person, and they repeated them less often.

They welcomed failure as part of the growth process. They also regard failure as a teacher of the importance of resilience.

● **Reasons for Pulling Back.** In many situations, the Somebodies scaled back their grand ambitions. Not all career movement is forward. Sometimes the path not taken can be as valuable as the one actually followed.

At key points, the 100 Somebodies showed the ability to alter their ambitious plans, to refrain from certain opportunities. For photographer April Saul, the offer of a high-profile but dangerous assignment in Bosnia presented her with a career decision about what she was and was not willing to do. She declined.

### No Cookbook for Success

These people who ascended to the top rungs of various establishment ladders also remained open to their own unconventional notions and ideas. They didn't assume that certain starting points in life must lead to certain ending points. They didn't follow pre-programmed career tracks or accept others' assumptions. Above all, they understood and practiced constant growth and personal reinvention.

Success isn't a matter of simply applying the traits, habits or practices of the 100 Somebodies. Each quality works differently for different leaders — or for the same leader at different points in his or her career. There's no such thing as automatic results.

The 100 Somebodies built highly respectable bodies of work, often over decades, by using the human intangibles of timing and wisdom, and by understanding when something made sense for them and when it did not. More than raw intelligence, their ability to know themselves and remain flexible to necessary changes propelled their careers, from the first job on. These qualities were the closest thing to a secret sauce in leaders' recipes for success. ■

For additional information on Tower Automotive CEO Kathleen Ligocki's take on resilience, go to: <http://my.summary.com>