

## Springboard: Launching Your Personal Search for Success

G. Richard Shell

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**G. Richard Shell : Springboard: Launching Your Personal Search for Success** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Springboard: Launching Your Personal Search for Success:

36 of 37 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant and Concise Synthesis of the Best Success and Happiness Literature!By DonovanProfessor Shell brings together a wealth of information from some of the greatest books on success, happiness, and positive psychology. Not only does he present all of this information in a clear and concise format, but he also does it in a way that actually integrates (ties together) the information so as to make a

clearer and more illuminating whole. Before reading this book, by pure coincidence, I had already read nearly all of the books Professor Shell references. Even though I had already read these books, I didn't have a clear grasp of how the different concepts and ideas fit together. If I could start all over, I would have saved myself a lot of time by starting with Professor Shell's book, and then digging deeper into the books he references based on the extent to which I wanted more answers (the books he references are all really good, too, in their own respects, but they are narrower in scope). The other important thing that Professor Shell does in this book is bring a cautious and discerning eye to his survey of the best success and happiness literature. Think of him as a gold miner panning through dirt for little nuggets of gold: When the literature or research he cites contains questionable or dubious claims, he points it out, or provides an explanation for why something that sounds utterly preposterous might actually be true for other psychological reasons. Lastly, he uses great examples of historic figures to illustrate some of the ideas, ones I hadn't come across before in my own survey of the literature. This is the first time I have written a review on before, and I am doing this out of a profound sense of gratitude and respect for Professor Shell, and for my own desire to spread these ideas.

All The Best, Donovan  
13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Very helpful book if you're looking for the next act in your professional career or life  
By David Alan Tussey  
I am now in my 60s, and am looking for what to do next in life. This book is very helpful at helping navigate those tough questions. It attempts to help the reader answer two questions: 1) what is success in your life, and 2) how do you achieve it? It doesn't provide answers, but rather food for thought and some exercises to assist you in answering these questions. I'm getting a lot out of reading this. Well researched and written.  
3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Review of a Life-Altering Book  
By Kirk Jonathan Barbera  
Before he was an award-winning Wharton professor, Richard Shell was a lost young man who once contracted hepatitis and passed out on the side of a road in Kabul. He had defied his father, a U.S. Marine Corps general, by deciding that a life in the military wasn't for him. It was the Vietnam era and Shell turned in his draft card to become a pacifist. But now he was lost. No longer was his life prescribed for him. After a few years wandering from job-to-job, he set out to travel the world with his life savings of \$3,000. Traveling from monastery to hostel, in country after country, reading philosophy, doing drugs, and trying to "find himself," he succeeded only in finding rock bottom. On that day in Kabul he says, "Something shifted in my life. I had pushed myself to my psychological and physical limits and had ended up alone, filthy, sick, and no closer to finding my direction than I was a year earlier" (p. 5). It would take Shell many years to finally find his true productive purpose: teaching. As a senior faculty member at Wharton School of Business, he created the popular course "The Literature of Success: Ethical and Historical Perspectives." His book, *Springboard: Launching Your Personal Search for Success*, is a wonderful condensation of this course. It takes the reader through thousands of years of "success literature" (as he identifies the genre) from Plato and Aristotle down to Covey and Gladwell. *Springboard* is broken into two parts, both designed to be a guide for the reader. The goal is to answer for oneself two big questions: What is success? How will I achieve it? In his first four chapters, Shell explains how many of us come to think about success. Often, we are more influenced by our culture, our parents, our peers and teachers, than we realize. For example, parents sometimes try to define success for their children in terms of pursuing a particular career. Parents who begin conversations with their children by saying "when you get a PhD" or "when you become a doctor" are unwittingly putting pressure on their children to regard achievement in that field as the standard of success. This pressure is applied at a time when a child is struggling to discover his own personal interests. To help the reader assess his own view of success, Shell created what he calls the "Six Lives Exercise" (You can take the exercise at [RichardShell.com](http://RichardShell.com).) The exercise briefly describes the lives of six individuals, each considered to be successful in different respects. For example, one life features a man whose profession is stone mason. He makes enough money to live well, but he has had some money problems in his life. On the positive side, he loves his work. As the mason, which is based on a real person says, "Every piece of stone you pick up is different. . . . In my work, I can see what I did the first day I started and watch it grow. And I go back years later and it is still there to see. It's a good day laying brick or stone." The exercise asks you to rank these six individuals in terms of how you view their success; the goal is to help you clarify your own priorities in life. Interestingly, Shell notes how his audience almost always chooses Stone Mason as the most successful life, even over Wealthy Investor or Banker. This makes sense since his audience consists of Wall Street executives, doctors, pharmaceutical researchers, business students and government officials. He surmises that "these people lead lives considerably more complicated than the Stone Mason's. The gap between the Stone Mason's life and the lives they are actually living is striking." Thus, he asks them the question: "What steps might you take right now to move your life closer to that ideal?" Among other things, this exercise reveals the very real trade-offs in all successful lives. For example, a teacher in one life finds meaning in her work, but she has lost touch with one of her children. The Wealthy Investor goes on exciting trips, but is unmarried. Chapters five through nine provide dozens of anecdotes and case studies from psychology, biography, and philosophy. This section is aimed at providing numerous concretes to help the reader answer the question "How Will I Achieve [Success]?" The motif throughout *Springboard* is that the critical element missing in most self-help books is you—a consideration of your particular characteristics and values. Shell rejects the dichotomy of either "follow your passion" or "follow the money" when picking

a career. Instead, he suggests searching for your unique combination of skills, aptitudes, and passions. And then you should consider what activities others will reward you for doing. Shell calls this melding of personal traits and career opportunities the "sweet spot," and finding it is the critical moment in every success story Shell has ever encountered. One story he tells is of the first television celebrity chef, Julia Child. She originally wanted to be a famous novelist, but after moving to New York she discovered that the only work she could get was copywriting. WWII began and Child decided to work toward the cause of winning the war. She got a job in Washington, DC, compiling large amounts of written data on classified communications from Asia. After the war she lived in France and fell in love with French cuisine. With her unique combination of strong writing skills and love of cooking she wrote, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. This led to a brief appearance on a public television show, where she demonstrated how to cook an omelet. When she accidentally dropped an ingredient on the floor, she said to the audience, "Remember you are alone in the kitchen, so who is going to see you?" (p. 119). The audience fell in love. Every step of the way Child utilized the skills she had previously gained to launch herself into the next phase of her career. Writing her cookbook "combined virtually all of the skills she had learned up to that time, including her writing ability, her ability to organize large amounts of written data, and her newfound passion for French Cooking. The resulting work, the 734-page *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* . . . went on to become one of the bestselling cookbooks of all time." (p. 118) By pursuing a new venue, television, Child discovered a new skill and passion—she loved "hamming it up" with the audience. "Her signature style involved pratfalls, whoops, shrieks, and picking up ingredients she had dropped onto the floor" (p. 119). Success, Shell points out, "usually resides in the unique combination of capabilities you bring to what you do. Tens of millions of people are passionate about cooking. An equal number are interested in and talented at writing. But how many cooks also write exceptionally well? Relatively few. And how many of those take the time to actually write a book about cooking? Fewer still." (p. 119) Discovering your view of success, honing it, and then attaining it is an arduous task. Shell didn't find success until he was thirty-seven. Taking the time to assess what success means to you is critical to leading a happy flourishing life. As Shell writes (p. 10), "You do not have 'one true purpose' for your life that it is your duty to find or die trying. The raw materials for success are tucked away inside you and your next big goal is probably within arm's reach; if only you have the clarity of mind to see it."

Everyone knows that you are supposed to "follow your dream." But where is the road map to help you discover what that dream is? You have just found it. In *Springboard*, award-winning author and teacher G. Richard Shell helps you find your future. His advice: Take an honest look inside and then answer two questions: What, for me, is success? How will I achieve it? You will begin by assessing your current beliefs about success, including the hidden influences of family, media, and culture. These are where the pressures to live "someone else's life" come from. Once you gain perspective on these outside forces, you will be ready to look inside at your unique combination of passions and capabilities. The goal: to focus more on what gives meaning and excitement to your life and less on what you are "supposed" to want. Drawing on his decades of research, Shell offers personalized assessments to help you probe your past, imagine your future, and measure your strengths. He then combines these with the latest scientific insights on everything from self-confidence and happiness to relationships and careers. Throughout, he shares inspiring examples of people who found what they were meant to do by embracing their own true measure of success. Eric Adler: one of Shell's former students who walked away from a conventional business career to help launch a revolutionary new concept in public education that has placed hundreds of inner-city high school students in top colleges. Kurt Timken: a Harvard-educated son of a Fortune 500 CEO who found his true calling as a hard-charging police officer fighting drug lords in southern California. Cynthia Stafford: an office worker who became one of her community's leading promoters of theater and the arts. Get ready for the journey of a lifetime—one that will help you reevaluate your future and envision success on your own terms. Students and executives say that Richard Shell's courses have changed their lives. Let this book change yours.

From *Publishers Weekly* Shell (*Bargaining for Advantage*) offers a guide to a more fruitful life based on his popular Success Course at the Wharton School of Business. In the first part of the book, the reader learns about developing his or her own definition of success—a process that includes determining the ideal life to lead and redefining happiness as something beyond family, friends, and fortune. Citing research on happiness and wealth, as well as anecdotes and spiritual wisdom, Shell concludes that meaningful work—i.e., work that uses your talents, ignites you emotionally, and is financially rewarding, in addition to building health and strong relationships—is the true measure of success. The latter half of the book illustrates the most viable way to pursue this new concept of prosperity: expand your social circle, increase your self-confidence, and focus on your unique skill set. Along the way, Shell incorporates worksheets and exercises, and he shares stories about people at different points in their careers, from Ivy League business school students to would-be retirees, who reinvented themselves to become happy, well-rounded individuals whose work inspires them and benefits larger communities. Shell's nine steps to success are simple enough

to follow, and readers may come away believing that a more prosperous life is attainable with a few tweaks and a little soul searching. Agent: Michael Snell, Michael Snell Literary Agency. (Aug.)From Booklist\*Starred \* Shell teaches at the Wharton School of Business, and in addition to his obvious expertise in the specialties of negotiation, persuasion, and interpersonal influence, his outstanding book on achieving success has exactly what this kind of examination needs, common sense and encouragement. The author's honesty is established early on as he posits the basic premise of his presentation, "There is no foolproof system that always leads to success." That said—that admitted—he nevertheless goes on to unfold a wise program that rests on two factors: one must clarify one's goals (which means, of course, that a personal definition of success must be arrived at), and the resources and initiatives you need to achieve success should be identified. In well-ordered chapters, Shell develops the stages of his program for success, one important feature of which is determining what you do better than most people. Another aspect of his program that raises this book above others of its ilk is his exploration of the "science of impression management," which boils down to this: social skills affect success. For all library patrons, not simply those who browse the business shelves. --Brad Hooper "Springboard is our pick for Business Book of the Year, the one we believe best helps those in business define success and achieve it. [It is] an even handed, well researched, and thoroughly humanistic book [that] needs to find a home on the shelves—and in the hearts and minds—of anyone who wants to be more successful." 800CEOREAD, Winner of the 2013 Best Business Book of the Year "In addition to [Shell's] obvious expertise in the specialties of negotiation, persuasion, and interpersonal influence, his outstanding book on achieving success has exactly what this kind of examination needs, common sense and encouragement." Booklist (STARRED review) "Shell's nine steps to success are simple enough to follow, and readers may come away believing that a more prosperous life is attainable with a few tweaks and a little soul searching." Publishers Weekly "Written with expert cadence, this book manages to be an 'easy read' without skimping on quality. Shell provides ample research findings, anecdotes, and the expert guidance he's gleaned from his work in the field." 800CEOREAD "Books to Watch: August 2013"