

***The 6 mindshifts you need to  
Rise and Thrive at work***

**don't  
quit  
*your*  
day  
job**

***Aliza Knox with Wendy Paris***

**WILEY**

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Aliza shares real stories in a fresh, original and relatable manner. And they add up to great advice on how you can make the most of your career.

— **Claire Hughes Johnson,**  
**COO, Stripe**

*Don't Quit Your Day Job* is an inspiring, engaging, and essential read on how to be the best you can be in life and your career. Aliza provides her uniquely human, practical and honest insights into what can help you achieve your full potential, drawing on her rich career and experiences to provide pragmatic ways to successfully respond to the many challenges of becoming a great leader.

— **David Thodey,**  
**Chair, Xero and Tyro; former Chair, CSIRO; former CEO, Telstra**

This is the best career advice I've read. Follow it and you will enjoy your life and work, and excel in what matters to you. Aliza brings her extensive senior global experience across a range of industries to help readers work out what they want and how to get it. It answers every question I've ever been asked by people seeking career direction and advice. Wish I'd written it.

— **Margie Seale,**  
**Non-Executive Director, Scentre Group and Westpac; former CEO, Random House Australia and New Zealand**

When I started my career at BCG 30 years ago, Aliza Knox taught me some of the principles that got me to where I am today. In *Don't Quit Your Day Job*, you'll learn them too. Her advice is priceless.

— **Brad Banducci,**  
**CEO Woolworths Group**

*Don't Quit Your Day Job* provides practical tips and advice for success in your career. Aliza Knox distils her vast experience as a global business leader and mentor to highlight the mindshifts you need to expand your career opportunities and build your success at any stage of your life.

— **Dig Howitt,**  
**CEO and President, Cochlear Ltd**

Good people are hard to find and keeping them is even harder. *Don't Quit Your Day Job* will show individuals how they can get the most from where they are, and give managers the tips and tools to keep their talent from moving on.

— **Alison Deitz,**  
**Chief Executive Partner, Norton Rose Fulbright Australia**

Your career can take you anywhere. This highly readable and relatable book by Aliza Knox, *Don't Quit Your Day Job*, is an inspiration for how to make your career and your life work for you.

— **Alison Davis,**  
**Managing Partner, Blockchain Coinvestors**

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## Letter to the reader

If you have a job or are seeking one, this book is for you. While the conversation in the media or even at a dinner party might be about entrepreneurship or exploiting your 'side hustle' or 'the great resignation', the day-to-day reality is that most of us work for someone else, and, increasingly, in large organisations. We also work for decades, which may sound daunting (and exhausting), but as you'll see in this book, plenty of people find ways to make work rewarding, fulfilling and, dare I say, *fun*.



Across the globe, an increasing percentage of people work for large companies. In the UK alone, nearly half of the workers are employed by firms with 250 people or more. In the US, as of the 2014 Census data, nearly 40 per cent of workers were employed at either large companies (those with 2500 people or more),<sup>1</sup> or very large ones (with 10 000 people or more).<sup>2</sup> Close to another third of workers in the US were at mid-sized companies (with 100 to 2500 employees).

As corporations and businesses continue to grow, so will opportunities within them. What you need to succeed are the six mindshifts laid out as chapters in this book. The mindshifts are outlined, then brought to life with relatable examples of people I've met along the way. All of these people are real, though some names, and occasionally some genders, have been changed — as they used to say on TV — ‘to protect the innocent’. Ways to put the mindshifts into practice are listed at the end of each chapter so you can adopt the ones that work for you.

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If my life had worked out differently, I might have been a forester — planting trees, assessing timber plots — and writing about it all in a rough-hewn log cabin surrounded by towering redwoods, with the occasional bear ambling by.

This wasn't actually a dream of mine as a child; growing up in the US, I had no specific vision of what my career would be. I worked odd jobs to earn and save money in high school, and one of these jobs involved taking aptitude and personality tests at Stanford University's Graduate School of Education. One test indicated that I'd be well-suited to a life in forestry or the clergy.

Neither option, I confess, interested me remotely.

I wasn't really exposed to people working within large corporations, and I never particularly thought about corporate life either. I've now spent the past 40 years working for, and leading, businesses at some of the world's most interesting, innovative companies — including more than a decade heading the Asia Pacific (APAC) region for parts of Google, as well as for Twitter and Cloudflare. Before that, I served as the first female partner in Asia at Boston Consulting Group (BCG). Over the years, I also had

roles in the financial services sector, including at Visa, American Express and Charles Schwab.

I went to Brown University, where you didn't have to declare a major until your junior year, which was one reason I chose the school. After graduating with a degree in applied math and economics, I took a job in banking because it ticked two boxes on my wish list: a great training program, and the opportunity to move to New York City, which seemed like an exciting place to live.

While much of my career has been in sales and general management, these were not early interests. As a teen, I subscribed to *Seventeen* magazine (typical) and *Psychology Today* (oddball choice), thinking that maybe I'd become a psychologist. I had exactly one early experience in sales, creating an ad book with three friends in high school to fund our senior year activities. I had to go to dozens of merchants I didn't know and ask for money to advertise to the students and parents. It was my idea and I persisted with it. Looking back now, that is the real through-line in my career — perseverance. Once I decide on something, I'm full steam ahead, driven to make it happen. Recently, my mom said that even in high school I was always tired because I was trying to cram in one more thing.

It's easy to feel like you should know exactly what you want to do in your career in order to be successful and happy, to have a specific vision and then execute it. But that hasn't been my path, or that of many of the people in this book. The fact is, you don't have to know what you want to do to rise and thrive, and even if you do know now, you may change your mind later. Today's rapid pace of change means that many of the most exciting fields and companies of the future probably don't exist now. Even if you love what you're doing, something else might arise that intrigues you (as the Internet did for me in my forties).

Even though I didn't have a specific plan in mind (other than travel; I knew I wanted to travel), I did have drive, curiosity and a desire to connect and help out. These traits have helped me, and embracing them can help you, too.

People who look at my career from the outside and see me as super-successful sometimes conclude that success must mean never failing. But this isn't true either. While I love helping build businesses, and am proud of my achievements, I've also had my share of missteps, including twice taking jobs that I quickly regretted and left in less than a year. I've been laid off; once my department was dissolved, and I had to let go of my whole team, and then leave myself.

Success doesn't require an early, clear-cut vision, nor does it come from never having setbacks. Rather, it grows from working hard and adopting some crucial mindsets or *mindshifts* — attitudes you can learn, and put into practice.

Over the past 40 years, I've come to identify six essential *mindshifts* made by those who succeed; six powerful attitudes and actions that underpin organisational success. I have watched people thrive using these mindsets. I've also seen other very smart, talented people fail to flourish because they didn't embrace them. These are the mindsets I want to share with you in this book.

Success means something different to different people, of course. For you, it might mean achieving a certain lifestyle, or rising to a desired position or reputation within an industry. It could mean fame and fortune, influence, making a difference, helping others, or supporting a family comfortably. In my own life, success has meant having the lifestyle I want, achieving financial comfort sufficient for my family and some charitable giving, and rising to reasonably high positions, though not CEO. But I do also have a universal view of success, which includes having

some sense of control over your life; feeling of agency in your career; and liking, for the most part, how you spend your time, who you spend it with, and how much you're earning. This is the view of success that this book can help you achieve.

I've also had a not-so-secret sideline occupation as a 'mentor maven', an unofficial (unpaid) career coach and supporter for hundreds of people at all stages of their working lives. Over the decades, I have listened to, and advised, people negotiating promotions and setbacks, struggling to rise and preserve time with their families, hoping to move overseas or return home, deciding whether to accept an offer or keep looking, and strategising about how to fight back when wronged.

The stories of some of these mentees are in this book, too. Helping other people develop has been the most fulfilling activity of my life, besides raising my own kids. Maybe having lacked the coordination (or popularity) required to be a cheerleader in high school left me with a desire to cheer on people in the career arena. Mentoring and advising people has brought me tremendous pride, and enabled me to gain more pleasure from working. If I didn't work, I wouldn't be able to help these people or forge these connections.

Sometimes people reach out for advice because I've long been one of the few female sales executives in the hardscrabble tech business. Others seek input because I'm older and have survived. Or because I'm more approachable than Tony Robbins or a celebrity CEO. People want to know how to find time to raise children and travel regularly for work, how to manage setbacks without letting them sap confidence and derail goals. This is another reason I'm writing this book: to take this mentoring to more

people, to share with you what those I've mentored have learned.

After so many years in tech, I now see my career as a series of software upgrades. Aliza 1.0 was consulting and financial services; 2.0 was tech. What you're holding in your hands now is part of Aliza 3.0, the third iteration of my working life. I'm still experimenting with what I want to do, and this book is part of this third phase. It's a way to continue my greatest work passion: sharing lessons learned from decades of leading US companies across new frontiers while building and maintaining strong connections between teams around the world. In a world where 'remote workforce' defines more of us than ever before, this background allows me to offer insight and wisdom as a leader who has been in charge of far-flung workforces for years.

In many ways, now is the best time ever to be looking for a job or seeking a better one. It seems like you can't read the news without seeing an article about how much work is changing, both the structure within offices, and what people want and expect from their jobs. We are in a moment of real dynamism at work. Companies that once required everyone to be physically present at headquarters or in one of their offices around the globe are going remote or adopting hybrid models. Employees who never had the flexibility to work from home are now considering it, or even making it a condition of employment.

COVID-19 has forced, or allowed, people to re-evaluate their careers and values, their trajectory and even what a career path means for them. Nobel prize winner and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman summed up the general sentiment, 'It seems quite possible that the pandemic, by upending many Americans' lives, also caused some of them to reconsider their life choices.'<sup>3</sup>

In many fields, employers are scrambling to fill roles. The demand for workers affects everything from salary and bonuses to in-office perks, flexible work arrangements and even time off. This gives would-be employees leverage that didn't exist for most of my time at work.

Additionally, corporations, non-profits, government agencies and universities are investing resources in expanding the diversity of job candidates, employees and leaders, and rightly so. This opens exciting opportunities for many people who may have felt shut out of top jobs in the past, and is leading to an improved workplace.

Diversity also boosts the bottom line, an undeniable motivator for firms. Take gender diversity, as one example: a Peterson Institute for International Economics survey of nearly 20 000 firms operating in 91 countries found a repeated, demonstrable correlation between women at the C-suite level and higher profitability:

***... and the magnitude of the estimated effects is not small. For example, a profitable firm at which 30 percent of leaders are women could expect to add more than 1 percentage point to its net margin compared with an otherwise similar firm with no female leaders.<sup>4</sup>***

Even if, in your own life, you've experienced the push for diversity as more talk than action, a more diverse workforce is absolutely the direction of the future.

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Career success increasingly depends on working well with others within an organisation. For me, this book could also be called, *How to Succeed in Business by Being Your Best Self*. It describes a way of rising in your career that hinges on exhibiting the attributes we ascribe to being a good person, colleague and friend: being reliable and

trustworthy, encouraging of others and making time for yourself.

This advice comes not only from my work experience, but also from my deep belief in the value of caring about others while also advocating for yourself; of seeing the world as full of opportunities, not a zero-sum-game; the options plentiful, not scarce. You can thrive in your career without adopting a narrow-eyed, cutthroat, winner-take-all approach. Yes, work is highly competitive, and you can't expect anyone else to look out for you, but you. A career is not a family; your boss doesn't love you like a good parent, and may not even like you. Your boss doesn't have to be your friend, but they do need to value the work you're doing and respect your contribution.

There certainly are people who are jerks and succeed. They have personal goals and they go after them; if they step on a few people along the way, that doesn't deter them. Nasty people can do well in business. As much as I'd like to believe that the people who climb on others are miserable at home, they may not be. Some may even be happy with their lives. But this overly self-focused approach to success is not mine, and not the vision of this book. (It is, however, one reason you need stamina, which I cover in [chapter 2](#). Part of thriving is surviving, including being able to process unfairness and refocus on your own path.)

The strategy in this book is not about using others to get ahead. This is not Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, nor Machiavelli's *The Prince*. It's an approach that involves being open and enthusiastic about work and those around you, learning the power structure within your place of business, making sure you find supporters at work and outside of your job, and being a mentor and supporter for those coming up after you. It's about making a choice and throwing yourself into it, getting out of a role or company if

it becomes clear that you can't get ahead within it, and being flexible about your dreams. It advocates being open to the serendipity around you, the people you meet and the personal passions that are part of a full life.

The book could also, perhaps, be called, *Getting In and Staying In*. So many of these mindsets require stamina, and while [chapter 2](#) focuses specifically on this attribute, as you'll see, a long, rewarding career requires being able to deal with setbacks, to refocus and continue to do what's needed to thrive.

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## **The six mindshifts, in brief**

I see the mindshifts in this book as timeless. They are based on my 40 years of work and of listening to and guiding people at all stages of their careers, from recent college grads and mid-career professionals to leaders within Fortune 100 firms. It includes my stories and those of numerous people who represent a wide range of backgrounds and professions. Each chapter ends with specific takeaways you can apply in your own life. The world of work is always changing, but these essential mindshifts remain the same.

Organisational life is appreciably better now for many than in the recent past. Piruze, who you meet in [chapter 1](#), is an example of how people today are endeavouring to improve the work environment — and winning. She focused on doing an excellent job at work and at home, and designing a role that would not mean forfeiting the time she needed in either realm. As she discovered, thriving in both worlds is easier if you are very clear about what you want, present your desires to your boss professionally and clearly (backed

by data, if you can find it), and remain flexible and willing to work with the firm to make it a success for everyone.

Stamina is a career superpower and, as I explain in [chapter 2](#), stamina can be built. One important mindset to help build stamina: don't over-focus on the negative. Another: remember that you have options. As Mariabrisa discovered when she did some 'job dating' to see what other options might exist, her skills and experience were far more valuable in the marketplace than she knew.

In [chapter 3](#), you will meet Rahul and learn why I offered him a job while we were walking through a revolving door together in Beijing (hint: we formed a bond while travelling). You will learn that connections with peers and leaders can be as significant as work performance when it comes to rising and thriving, and that arguably the most important capital you can accrue in business is not financial capital, but *social* capital.

Yet another story, of a man I call Bo, in [chapter 4](#), shows in some cases how much things haven't changed in the world of work, despite today's focus on employee satisfaction, hybrid teams and diversity. You still will likely have experiences of being treated unfairly, and you have to fight back when you're wronged. No, this does not have to mean taking a firm to court, or even being rehired after an unjust termination. But it does mean standing up for yourself in a way that will let you move forward, and preserve your good relationship with your career.

In [chapter 5](#), you will learn about how people are using movement to rise and thrive — not only moving up, as in preparing for and getting promotions, but also moving from one field to another, and between firms, industries and sectors. You'll also learn how to create movement where you are through 'job crafting', which a man I call Tim has

done to redesign his current job to include more challenges and creative growth, culminating in higher job satisfaction.

And in [chapter 6](#), you will see how Sierra's request to move to a company's overseas office expanded her professional opportunities and enhanced her personal life — even though she didn't wind up heading to her first dream destination. Like Sierra, your desire to move overseas can be a benefit to your company. Understanding and embracing the truly global nature of work today is key to succeeding and making the kinds of connections that help work feel meaningful.

We are all standing together at a unique, historic inflection point, a moment in which our beliefs about the future of work are shifting as rapidly as the technology we're using to make it happen. This change is exciting and challenging, and it requires a strong set of tools and a new outlook to succeed.

This book is that toolbox. Thank you for opening it and being part of the conversation. Here's to rising and thriving into the future, whatever it may bring.

## Notes

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2. Francis, T 2017, 'Why you probably work for a giant company, in 20 charts', *Wall Street Journal*, 6 April, <https://www.wsj.com/graphics/big-companies-get-bigger/>.
3. Krugman, P 2021, 'The revolt of the American worker', *The New York Times*, 14 October,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/14/opinion/workers-quitting-wages.html>.

4. Noland, M, Moran, T, Kotschwar, B 2016, 'Is gender diversity profitable? Evidence from a global survey', Peterson Institute for International Economics, <https://www.piie.com/publications/working-papers/gender-diversity-profitable-evidence-global-survey> .

## *mindshift one*

# **Go for both: Your work and your life are on the same team**

### **Power perspectives in this chapter**

- embrace non-work passions
- make work fun
- don't agonise over decisions as there are very few truly wrong ones
- see the serendipity and act on it.

In 2007, after more than two decades of working in financial services and consulting — a journey that took me from Bankers Trust in New York City to BCG in Sydney and Singapore, and then to Charles Schwab and Visa in California — I did something radical. I made a mid-career switch that was risky. I took a lower title and a pay cut to move into a new industry that I didn't know much about: technology. I moved to Google to run APAC online sales (followed by leadership roles at Twitter and, most recently, Cloudflare, an internet security company).

Not long after I landed the job at Google, I travelled from my then-home in San Francisco to Sydney to introduce myself to the Australian team. While in Sydney, I met a young American woman named Suzy Nicoletti. Suzy was at the beginning of her career, and was bright and energetic. She seemed right at home in outdoorsy Sydney. We immediately bonded over a conversation about swimming.

(It's kind of impossible *not* to talk about the water in Sydney, a harbour city with beaches.) Suzy had been a competitive swimmer in college in Los Angeles; I'm also an avid swimmer, though not at the collegiate level. We also talked about our favourite American foods that are unavailable in Asia (Stove Top Stuffing, Suzy; Diet Dr Pepper, me). Chatting about non-work interests like these helps reveal the human side of colleagues, and of yourself, making it a valuable part of having a career you love because it helps you create a work community filled with people you care about.

Over the next few years, Suzy would reach out occasionally to check in and update me about her career progress and goals. This is often how I become a mentor to someone; we'll meet through work or socially, and take the time to connect. Over time, Suzy began expressing a desire to step into a larger leadership role.

After five years at Google, I left to take another Singapore-based position: building APAC for Twitter. I needed someone to fill an important role running mid-market sales and operations in Australia. *This would be a great opportunity for Suzy Nicoletti!* The job had a lot of responsibility and would be a big promotion aligned with her career goals. I was excited to offer her the position.

But when I did, she turned me down.

How was this possible? How could she say no to a great role (and one that would let her work for a great boss, as in *me*, I might add)?

She wanted to have kids, she told me. From everything she'd heard about the demands of corporate leadership and of caring for a baby, she couldn't do both. She had to pick one or the other. Also, she wasn't sure she could handle the job.

I knew she could do the work, and that she could be a good leader *and* a great parent. I did not buy the idea that you could only have one or the other — I still don't — and I told her so.

I've never subscribed to that either-or limiting view, and I often feel like it's part of my personal mission to help others see beyond it. Not everyone wants a family, but I do believe everyone can have a great career and a fulfilling personal life. During several calls, I tried to steer Suzy toward taking the job. How could she give up before trying? Why let her desire to have a family slow her professional growth? During a turning-point conversation over lattes at a beach café in Sydney, she finally agreed to give it a shot.

She thrived in the position, *and* she had her baby. She went on to have a second child while still in that role. Within three years, she landed another promotion, this time as the managing director of Twitter, Australia/New Zealand.

I'm happy to report that her career and (now three) children are all doing well.

## **The 'Ah-Hah!' of Suzy's story: step off the seesaw of work-life balance**

So many people I've met believe they'll come to an 'either-or' moment in their careers as Suzy did, a time when one of their most important desires will have to give way. They ask, 'Isn't it impossible to have a great career *and* a really fulfilling home life? Don't I have to sacrifice one for the other?'

No, you don't. Not in my experience, or in the experience of hundreds of people I've met and advised over the years. Yes, there are a lot of difficulties when you're trying to

raise children and hold down a career, or practice your profession and pursue sport at a national level or work and be a full time career. It can be quite hard, and the difficulties the media points out are real.

There are trade-offs to be made, of course. You might not get as much sleep as you'd like all the time. Your house might not be as consistently clean as you wish. Your wardrobe might not be particularly stylish (I'm talking about myself here). You might push some limits occasionally (like flying from Singapore to Thailand for a meeting in a huge raincoat to hide from the airline-rule-bound flight attendants *just how pregnant* you are. Yes, me again). It can be expensive to manage with a modicum of calm. My husband and I definitely spent way more than we'd planned, or thought we could, on child care to accommodate both of our careers, and not everyone can afford that option.

Still, I've seen so many women and men rise in the corporate world, non-profit arena, government or academia while also having a full life outside of it — whether that means building a family or pursuing another personal passion. New Zealand's prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, is an inspiring, high-profile example of going for both. She had a baby while in office in 2018, and her partner, Clarke Gayford, stayed home to care for the baby. As she put it, 'I am not the first woman to multitask. I am not the first woman to work and have a baby; there are many women who have done this before.'

This helps send an important message: we can pursue our goals at work, and outside of it. In fact, Prime Minister Ardern is the second elected head of government to give birth in office, after Pakistan's late Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. As Helen Clark, the former New Zealand prime minister and former head of the UN Development

Programme, put it, 'For young women, the example Ardern is setting is an affirmation that they too can expect to have that choice'.<sup>1</sup>

In my own life, I have been able to hold leadership positions, and do the things that are important to me — rise in my career from an entry-level position at a bank in New York to leading teams distributed across Asia from Singapore for some of the top tech firms in the world — *and also* have a lot of fun with my husband, raise two sons, belong to three book groups, exercise and volunteer.

We've all heard the phrase 'work-life balance'. It sounds like a good goal, yet this formula suggests that work and life are at odds with each other, on opposite ends of a seesaw; one must be down for the other to be up. But our lives are not seesaws. They're more like cars, and we want all wheels filled to ensure a smooth, satisfying ride. We need to shift away from the constricting, adversarial model of 'your work *or* your life', and embrace a more expansive, inclusive, flexible vision. We can establish goals and drive toward them in *all* areas of our lives.

For some people, an expansive view includes not being tied to a specific job or title. Simon Kantor, a London-based, married father of two, has worked for a consultancy, the British Government, tech and communications firms (most recently as the chief operating officer), and today, is at Egon Zehnder, one of the top executive search firms in the world. While he's had high-powered, rewarding roles, he has structured his career to support his life as a whole and his family.

***Some people let their jobs define them, but for a lot of people, that's not the case. I don't define myself as a recruiter. I'm a father, a friend, a husband, a son. If I can add 'trusted advisor', I want to be that, too.***<sup>2</sup>

Simon takes something of a historical perspective to the question of the role of work. He sees himself as lucky, in general, to be able to pursue various opportunities, and to craft a life that he loves. 'I'm living a life my ancestors couldn't imagine', he says. 'To me, having health, good fortune and family is what matters. The work makes that possible.' (For more on Simon's varied career moves, see [chapter 5](#).)

Anne-Marie Slaughter, CEO of the Washington DC-based think tank New America and author of several books, has written about how she realised that success in multiple domains can depend on paying attention to the *specifics* of each. Slaughter was working as the dean of Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, living in New Jersey and raising two sons with her husband. In 2009, she took a two-year public service leave from the university for an incredibly prestigious (and time-consuming) position in Washington, DC, as the first female director of policy planning in the US State Department. This is one of the highest jobs in the State Department and it comes with huge responsibility and amazing opportunities. For Slaughter, it also came with having to leave her house to catch the 5.30 am train to DC every Monday, and being away from home until late Friday night.

Despite the amazing opportunities the job afforded, after two years, she decided it wasn't the right role, given her other life goals — which included being physically present for her two teenage sons at a time when they really needed her. She returned to Princeton, a decision made partly due to this realisation, and partly due to Princeton's policies around how long a professor can be absent before losing tenure (two years). 'I realized ... having it all, at least for me, depended almost entirely on what type of job I had', she writes.<sup>3</sup>