

MARY OLSON-MENZEL

WHAT
LIGHTS
YOU
UP?

**Illuminate Your Path and
Take the Next Big Step
in Your Career**

“In What Lights You Up? Mary Olson-Menzel provides essential tools for navigating today’s job market with confidence and clarity. Her practical advice ensures that you’re not just choosing a job, but a career that genuinely excites and motivates you.”

—Morag Barrett,

Keynote Speaker, Executive Coach, Leadership Facilitator,
author, and CEO of Skyeteam

“Whatever your age or professional journey, What Lights You Up? is the handbook for your favorite career future. This book is a must-read for anyone who wants to identify their unique attributes for bigger success.”

—Michael Clinton,

Former President and Publishing Director of Hearst Magazines and
author of *ROAR Into the Second Half of Life!*

“What Lights You Up? is a masterclass in career transformation, showcasing Mary Olson-Menzel’s deep expertise and long-standing commitment to personal and professional development. With over 25 years of experience, Mary coaches clients to recognize and harness their ‘inner light,’ offering not just a book but a powerful toolkit for anyone seeking to elevate their career. Her unique MVP 360 Pivot Program, distilled within these pages, provides practical exercises and insights that guide readers to uncover what truly motivates them and how to leverage these passions in the workplace. This work is a testament to Mary’s profound understanding of the job market’s evolving dynamics and the critical role of individuality in achieving professional success. It is an essential resource for anyone ready to enhance their career path with authenticity and purpose.”

—Camille Burns,

CEO of Women Presidents’ Organization

“This book illuminates the path to a fulfilling career with actionable inspiration. Be what you were meant to be and can be.”

—Rishad Tobaccowala,

Author of *Restoring the Soul of Business* and *Re-Thinking Work*

“In What Lights You Up?, Mary Olson-Menzel masterfully transforms the concept of career building into an inspiring journey of self-discovery. With a pragmatic and empathetic voice, Mary’s approach offers not just inspiration, but actionable steps to ensure that what lights you up guides you forward. Her blend of practical advice and personal reflection provides a structured roadmap to create a career you love. This book is a must-read for any professional looking to achieve fulfillment and find lasting passion in their work.”

—Marshall Goldsmith,

Thinkers50 #1 Executive Coach and *New York Times* bestselling author of
The Earned Life, *Triggers*, and *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There*

“Mary’s generous spirit and infectious light shine through in this book. Whether you’re looking to make a change or understand where you are, Mary’s tips will guide you to better knowing yourself and owning your future.”

—**Erica Hill,**
CNN Anchor and National Correspondent

“Mary Olson-Menzel has devoted her life to helping her clients find jobs and careers that align with their passion and provide the purpose that so many of us seek from our work. With this book she is now sharing her well-established methods with a broader audience. Anyone looking to be more fulfilled and engaged at work should do themselves a favor and read this book immediately.”

—**Chris Farrell,**
Former Chief Strategy Officer of Mattel, Inc.

“This book is about so much more than just finding a good job or even the right fit. It’s about finding meaningful and purposeful work that ‘lights you up’—that you were meant for. And that’s no easy task. But reading this book will set you on the right path.”

—**Joshua Macht,**
President of the MassLive Media Group and
former CEO of Harvard Business Publishing

“Whether you’re between jobs, just starting out, unhappy in your current role, or a seasoned professional, *What Lights You Up?* gives you critical tools to vastly improve your career path. Part workbook, part story, part reference guide, and part loving encouragement, this book will rekindle your hope and give you a winning edge to rise above the pack. With her unique mix of sunny optimism and practical advice, world-class business coach Mary Olson-Menzel walks you along her time-tested and proven path, showing you how to discover and land a job you love, or turn your current role into one that lights you up. This is the kind of book you’ll want to keep handy and reference at every phase of your career. As Mary says, ‘Don’t give up before the magic sets in.’ And to ignite that magic, all you need to do is pick up this book.”

—**Victoria Labalme,**
Hall of Fame Speaker and *Wall Street Journal*
bestselling author of *Risk Forward*

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WILEY

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This book is dedicated to my parents, Robert and Veronica, for teaching me how to love and encouraging me to follow my own light. To my son, Christopher, for reflecting that gift of light back to me, every single day. And to my husband, Dan, for holding down the fort through all of our adventures together. Also, to every client who has shared their journey with me. I am forever grateful.

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Introduction

WHAT IF YOU could change your life for the better, simply by tapping into your own natural resources and being intentional about the direction you want to go now? I believe you can! Congratulations, you have just taken the first step towards a brighter future! Through the pages of this book, you will start looking at your life with fresh eyes. By tapping into your own “light source,” you can design and follow the path to your next job and a more fulfilling career.

You bought this book for a reason, and I hope it inspires you to act and create a career path that lights you up. Let this book be your guide to your best career. And, most importantly, I want you to allow it to ignite your mind, illuminate your spirit, and keep the lights on in your heart.

I’m an executive coach—helping people thrive is my business. When people walk into my office, they often say they need help finding a job or getting promoted or that they just want more from their career and want to feel fulfilled and happy. I am lucky enough to have coached and guided hundreds of executives into more fulfilling careers

and so many others down a path of creating a life and doing work that they love.

What you'll get in the pages of this book is, in part, what my coaching clients pay me top dollar for, and it lights me up to share it with you. I can't wait for you to dive in!

First and most fundamental, discovering what lights *you* up is vital. You must learn how to identify and to recognize what this is before sharing it with a potential employer. Because if you can't see it yourself, most likely neither can they. This is where your adventure begins.

Guiding people to see their own value and greatness is my passion and my dream for you. I know that when your light is on, you will:

- Get hired faster
- Get promoted faster
- Make more money
- Have a career that has meaning and brings you joy

If you were to hire me as your coach, the MVP 360 Pivot Program is what we would embark on together. This book is based on my proven methodology, but it's important to keep in mind that when working one on one with someone, a lot of the process gets customized to meet the needs of the specific client. It's an organic unfolding that leads us to places together that we might not have been able to imagine ourselves had we not worked together. I hope that the work you do throughout the pages of this book takes you on a journey to places you have always dreamed about and beyond!

MVP 360 Pivot Program

Go deep: Who are you? The first step is taking the time to get to know yourself. We look at your life from a holistic perspective: financial, professional, and personal. We begin to help align your dreams with reality.

Personal brand: What is it that makes you unique? Why should an organization hire you over someone else with the exact same experience? What are your strengths and how can you “sell” them? What is your elevator pitch?

Positioning: What is your personal brand in the market? In addition to a strong resume, a robust, professional online profile is key.

Explore: Where do you see yourself? We work with you to design a target list that we call the Three Ps of places you want to work. We encourage you to think strategically and to look at all potential options and ideas with a fresh lens.

Expand: How can you tap your network? We help you think expansively about how to utilize the power of networking on all fronts. We encourage you to think outside of the box and go for it.

Opening doors: How do you find the best fit for you? We help navigate through the confusion and noise and find the right approach to every unique opportunity.

Preparation and rehearsals: How can you stand out from the rest? We work diligently to help you prepare for interviews and for every networking opportunity created. We want you to be prepared and put your best foot forward to “wow” the hiring managers.

Connection and support for success: How can we best support you? We are with our clients every step of the way to help you navigate and foster relationships that will lead to your next opportunity. Throughout the entire process, we are by your side, as a resource and a coach. We are also here to help you navigate and negotiate an offer that is a win-win for you and the organization. We stay close to you even after you have accepted the new position. We stay connected and offer ongoing coaching to help you adjust and excel in your new role, creating lasting success for your future.

You will see this process as you move through the pages and the exercises of this book. The world continues to evolve and the way people work is changing rapidly, and this in turn creates tremendous opportunity. Many of us get to choose how and where we work. Gone are the days of working 9 to 5 and celebrating 25 years at one company with a gold watch. Our work lives look different now, and more often employees are calling the shots about what that looks like. What's different now is that people have proven that they can be trusted to be even more productive, creative, and efficient when their needs are honored in a way that resonates with them.

People are standing up and saying, "I am valuable to this organization and I want to work on my own terms." Companies have been forced into a new frontier where the employee experience matters more than ever.

You deserve to love what you do! Your life is too precious to work in a place or a profession doing something that doesn't give you joy. Just remember, no job is perfect, but if you follow the 80/20 rule—80% good stuff and 20% stuff you don't necessarily love to do—you will be off to a good (and realistic!) start.

When I was a little girl, my parents told me that I could do whatever I wanted to do in life. I still wonder whether they believed that for themselves. Their story is a big part of why I do what I do today, and why it is imperative that you keep your lights on in your work and your heart—for your sake, and for the sake of all those who love you.

When I started this book, quite a few years ago, it was a different world than what it is today, but one thing remains the same: doing what lights you up is of the utmost importance in your career. The world of work will keep changing but that timeless truth is evergreen. At times we are pivoting, sometimes growing, sometimes flowing, and now we are transforming. Welcome to your transformation.

Throughout this book, I will be sharing wisdom and knowledge through quotes and excerpts from others who have an undeniable light in their work, so I'd like to start you out with this one.

“The whole secret of a successful life is to find out what is one’s destiny to do, and then do it.”

—*Henry Ford*

Enjoy the ride!

WHAT
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1

Identify Your Light

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

—Harriet Tubman

THANK YOU FOR picking up this book! It is true that everyone needs a little help now and then—and even the most successful people understand that a coach makes them even better. My very first “coaches” were my parents, guiding the way through my childhood. As I was growing up, my parents were a fascinating balance of creativity and business savvy. This created a stable and happy childhood for me. When my parents were happy, I felt safe and loved.

My mother was 42 when she had me; she tells me that having my little sister and me later in her life has kept her young, but I disagree. Maybe that was part of it, but there is so much more. She was an artist, a dancer, and a force to be reckoned with. When I was growing up, she taught art to our local community and attended art fairs around the region, selling her original pieces to art collectors far and wide. She was happy. As I write this book, I know now that doing what she loved is what kept her young for so many years.

When she passed away at the age of 98 in March of 2024, as I was finishing this book, her body was not as strong as it once was, but when she smiled, she still had a beautiful sparkle in her eyes and her soul,

especially when she was doing what she loved or with the people she loved. Her hands were shaky near the end and it was harder for her to do the fine art that she used to do, so later in her life she pivoted to doing collage and abstract watercolor. It's gorgeous and it made her light up as she continued to create beautiful art right up until the days before she passed. I was continually amazed by her creativity, her spirit, and her grit and the way she would throw her hands up in the air to greet me with such love and enthusiasm, every time I walked in the door.

I remember Mom as beautiful; she always was. When I was a child, she would walk into a room and people would notice. She had short, dark, and very stylish hair. Her eyes sparkled even when she wasn't smiling. She was filled with life, and she knew it, and so did everyone who met her. Even until her last day, she wore a flower in her hair and a twinkle in her eyes and people still noticed when she walked into a room at the retirement community where she lived. When I visited her in the days right before she died, she could still manage to throw her hands up in the air to greet me and do her dancing to the best of her abilities from her chair!

When I was in first grade, she came into my classroom to teach my classmates and me how to hula dance, the Hukilau, grass skirt, and all! I still remember it so vividly. My childhood friends constantly remind me how much fun she was when we were all growing up. At a recent Barrington High School reunion, a 50-something-year-old man (and my first-grade classmate) told me that learning the hula with my mom was one of the highlights of his entire first-grade experience. Even then, my mom's light was shining brightly for all my classmates to see. This authentic and true inner light was noticed by all, both young and old. This created a memory that made a lot of people remember my mom many years later.

Your inner light is your secret sauce. It's what makes you memorable and draws people to you. While the hope is that it will be seen and remembered by potential employers, the fortunate coincidence is that it will also be noticed by people in all areas of your life. Everyone around you will benefit from your inner light once you truly let it shine. Think about this. What is it that makes you memorable? How can you tap into that energy?

The world of work has forever changed and will continue to change. The good news is that what employers are looking for has