



CHAPTER II

WANDERERS GO EVERYWHERE

DESIGNING YOUR GO-TO-MARKET STRATEGY

In the last week I've uprooted myself from my home of fifteen years, moved all the way across the country away from everything I care about, and plunged myself into a frightening new career. In the first few nerve-wracking moments, I walk in here and find my producer lobbying to get herself transferred to another show. Abe Lincoln had a brighter future when he picked up his tickets at the box office.

—KELSEY GRAMMER AS FRASIER CRANE IN *FRASIER*

Have you ever heard of a go-to-market strategy? It's a common phrase in the business world when a company is ready to launch a new product. Entrepreneurs need a strong go-to-market strategy to ensure their new invention or process will sell. The focus is on how to reach out to customers and achieve a competitive advantage.

Well, whether you knew it or not, you've been working on your own personal go-to-market strategy since you started reading this book. You have been doing for yourself the same things a company would do for a hot product.

It's time to take your talents to the marketplace, however you define that. You might be planning to work for a nonprofit organization, go to law or medical school, join a dance troupe, or intern at a music production company, a bank, or a consulting firm. Maybe you're starting your own business. It doesn't matter: wherever you want to go, you will get there more efficiently if you have a solid go-to-market strategy. There's an old adage in the career business: the

job doesn't always go to the most qualified candidate; it goes to the best job seeker. So let's start creating your plan and then take action on it.

Start by considering four key questions as you create your go-to-market strategy:

- What are your strengths? What can you offer employers?
- What employers are you trying to reach?
- How are you going to present yourself to them?
- Where will you find them?

Sound familiar? We've asked modified versions of these questions throughout the Wise Wanderings process. We're just going to focus more directly now on how you take advantage of everything you have learned so far.

What Are Your Strengths for the Industry You Are Seeking? *What Can You Offer Employers?*

- In the business world, this is called your "value proposition." What is the value you would bring to an organization? You already know that your value for the marketplace can be found in your Network of Possible Wanderings: all the places your mind can take you because of what you've learned through your life.
- Review all your findings from parts 1 and 2 of this book. Gather up all the information you've uncovered about yourself through your Wandering Map, Possible Lives, your mindset analysis, your experimental wanderings, and so on.
- Your Network of Possible Wanderings is what the marketing world would call your "unique selling proposition." No one else has the exact same network, so focus on your unique capabilities.
- Did you notice how in many of the stories presented in this book, the individual had a special story to tell about their uniqueness? Think of Susan, the French major who got the marketing job by sharing how quickly she picked up French language and culture, and Chuck, the history major who sold the value of history. What are you saying or writing to sell the value of your major and your mindsets?

- Depending on the organization, your youth could be a major selling point: for instance, if you're seeking work at a marketing firm, your point of view on millennials could be valuable, particularly if the marketing team is significantly older.
- Remember the discussion of features and benefits in chapter 9? To be successful, you must be able to identify those.
- What specific skills have you developed?
- What are your unique advantages?
- Are there any gaps that need to be filled?

What are the key selling points you bring to the career field you're seeking?

What Employers Are You Trying to Reach?

- Creating a strong employer list is one of the best ways to target your market. If you don't know who is hiring in your field of interest, then you have a goal: find out who the key employers are. You can't market to an unknown organization: the more you can clarify places where you can be hired, the better your marketing materials will be.
- As you develop your list, consider whether any alumni from your institution work there and could be a helpful connection. Places to search include corporate and business databases (check your library), newspapers, company websites, LinkedIn, your alumni office, and so on.
- Make sure your market research is up-to-date. If you researched your career field in December and it's now May, have you kept up with any changes or trends? Perhaps there are start-up organizations that might hire you—or new alumni or other connections you could make.

- As you research, consider the characteristics of the organizations you're seeking. What issues or problems could you help solve?
- How competitive is the job market in your field? Should you be considering similar fields or related areas of employment? How will you adjust your plans to factor in the challenges?

Write down some ideas about how you're going to expand your potential employer list:

How Are You Going to Present Yourself to Employers? How Will They Know about You? What's Your Promotion Plan?

- Now it's time to make sure all your job-search tools are ready for prime time. Are your marketing materials (social media, résumé, cover letter, etc.) effective for your industry? Are you using the language for the field?
- Your résumé and cover letter should be personalized to each potential employer and focus on the value you would bring to the organization, and your social media presence should be interesting and engaging. If any of that is incomplete, finish it now. You can't move forward with poor materials.
- Who could help you? Have you compiled a list of alumni or other connections who could give you an inside scoop on the organization and perhaps even champion you to an employer? It's time to ratchet up your appearances at networking events, alumni gatherings, and other places where you might find someone who can help. Don't forget the different experimental wandering options. You never know who you might meet.
- Have you practiced your interview technique? Try practicing with your friends. Or find a mentor or other adult who will let you practice. Do you have your elevator pitch ready? If you've tried it out with your friends or at a job fair, has it worked? Do you need to revise it?
- Do you have the appropriate wardrobe for your field? Are you likely to be working in a business casual or more formal setting?

Do your clothes match the field you're seeking? You don't have to buy a whole new wardrobe. Start by buying one or two interview outfits. You can expand later.

- How "out there" are you? The wider your distribution, the more likely you'll find an employer.
 - Do all the individuals in your network have a copy of your résumé?
 - Have you shared your LinkedIn address with everyone?
 - Are you responding to online job postings? Using on-campus recruiting?
 - Are you going to career fairs?
 - Have you networked with your alumni office?

Write some notes here about your social media plan and other ways you will make sure you are visible in the market:

Where Will You Find Potential Employers?

- Here's a clue. They are everywhere. You just don't know it. Remember the value of experimental wanderings which put you in situations or locations where you are likely to make connections. Here's a great example of an unexpected way to find an employer:

Kristy wasn't having much luck with the job search. Feeling discouraged, she decided to participate in her career center's "practice interview" day. Alumni from all over the country were conducting thirty-minute practice interviews. Kristy didn't think much would come of it, but she figured it wouldn't hurt to practice and receive feedback from someone in the business world. Her interviewer turned out to be a banker from New York City. She enjoyed the interview, and he gave her some tips. At the end, he asked her what she really wanted to do: what was her dream job?

She smiled and said, "I would love to work in the marketing department for Universal Studios. It's my favorite theme park, and I know I could sell it." The alumnus gave her a funny look, and then said, "My sister works for Universal Studios. She used to be in the marketing office, but she has moved to another role. I'll be glad to put you in touch." Guess where Kristy is working now.

- Experimental wanderings pay off. Take advantage of opportunities, even when they seem unrelated to your interests.
- Make a list of the places where you might be able to connect with an employer. Are there trade shows related to your field? Job fairs? Professional organizations? These activities might have seemed like abstract ideas when you read about them in previous chapters, but if you're getting to a point where you must find a job soon, it's imperative that you take advantage of any event that connects you with potential employers.
- It goes without saying that you should also be using direct methods: apply for job openings and constantly monitor job boards—and not just big ones like Indeed but also the human resources sites for specific organizations you're interested in.
- If you're considering working for a start-up, check for local gatherings of entrepreneurs. This could be anything from networking programs at the chamber of commerce to innovation centers located at a local college or university, Meetup groups, or even LinkedIn. The start-up market can be more challenging to find, so looking for places where entrepreneurs gather can be your best bet.
- How do your prospective employers find candidates? Do they recruit on campus? Is your industry a "who do you know" kind of field where you must reach out and make connections? What are employers seeking? What characteristics must you have to interest them? Have you developed and promoted those characteristics? Remember, Possible Lives planners, if you're seeking different positions in different fields, your approach to each might need to be different.

Now, here's an interesting question: are you ready for an offer? You have been so busy seeking an opportunity that you might be a little surprised when one shows up! And now you're thrown into a whole new world of questions.

Have you researched the average salaries in your field and how

much you need to earn to survive (or how you plan to survive if the salaries in your field aren't as high as you had hoped)?

Don't forget that there's more to an offer than just a position. Companies offer benefits as well, and you will want to think through what you need there as well. It might be worth taking a lower-paying job, for example, if the benefits are better. On the other hand, if you don't need the benefits (maybe you have another source for health insurance, for example), then you might opt for the higher salary. Some benefits to be aware of include:

- Medical and dental insurance
- Raises, bonuses, overtime pay
- Life insurance
- Paid vacation days and sick leave
- 401(k) plans
- Profit sharing
- Tuition reimbursement
- Parking, commuting, expense reimbursement

Be ready to be hired! Sometimes people are so caught up in the search process that they are caught off guard when an offer comes through. Be ready to respond quickly to any employers who make you an offer.

KEEP MOVING FORWARD EVEN WHEN NOTHING SEEMS TO BE HAPPENING

Sheldon: Attention, everyone. I'm Sheldon Cooper. As those of you in the physics department might know, my career trajectory has taken a minor detour.

Barry Kripke: Off a cliff.

—"THE ELECTRIC CAN OPENER FLUCTUATION,"
THE BIG BANG THEORY

There are lots of rules out there about the job search. And some of them are good to follow. It's hard to argue with the linear types who major in engineering, set those goals, and move right into that engineering career. But when you let yourself become discouraged or depressed by all the rules that don't fit you, then they're no longer helping you.

One potential criticism of a system that encourages wandering is that somehow the people who follow it aren't competitive with the more linear, focused people who have a specific goal and shoot right toward it. The system, goes the criticism, is too vague. Well, you can't be who you aren't. If you don't have a specific goal, you have to start where you are. But then you also have to be doubly prepared with the best résumé and cover letter possible and the best interview skills so that you can match (and quite often surpass) the more linear-minded candidates. And you need to be willing to act as if you want the job you're interviewing for until you find a clearer direction.

A classic film metaphor I like to use to demonstrate the power of Wise Wanderers like you is "the Chicago Way" from the movie *The Untouchables*. Sean Connery plays Jim Malone, a streetwise cop in Chicago. He's advising Kevin Costner, who plays FBI agent Eliot Ness, on the way to bring down Al Capone's gang. Eliot Ness is discouraged that Capone always seems to be a step ahead of him and outsmarting him. Malone shares a secret. He says: "You wanna know how you do it? Here's how: They pull a knife; you pull a gun. He sends one of yours to the hospital; you send one of his to the morgue! That's the Chicago way, and that's how you get Capone. Now do you want to do that? Are you ready to do that?"

Now, no one is suggesting you follow that advice literally. Knives and guns will not help you at the job interview, and there is nothing funny about campus violence. What Connery/Malone is saying is that you have to know what your competition is thinking, you have to be better prepared than your competition, and you have to be willing to put in extra effort. So how should you, as a now certified Wise Wanderer, use "the Chicago Way" metaphor?

While other job seekers just think about what they might want to do, you use the *Wise Wanderings System* (and do the exercises again if necessary) to analyze your career plans.

While other job seekers try to fit into a linear path, you have taken advantage of *chaos theory* to get the most out of *synchronistic moments* and the *butterfly effect*.

While other job seekers write résumés, you *have written a targeted résumé* that demonstrates the power and value of your education, mindsets, and experimental wanderings.

While other job seekers prepare for an interview by reading a few things on the Internet, you have completed a *SWOT analysis* before each interview.

While other job seekers tell their strengths to employers, you have *prepared powerful stories* to show your strengths.

While other job seekers might read the company website to do research, you *became a corporate anthropologist*, unearthing new information and insight.

While others just attended class (or not!), you have mined your classes and your major for the value of what you were learning—and you make sure you let the employer know about it.

You deserve to be the first person considered for whatever job you seek. But you'll only get what you deserve if you take the steps necessary to develop the skills and knowledge needed to tackle the job market.

Here are ten suggestions for moving forward with your job search and your life, whether you are still seeking that first real job or have found it and are ready to do something else:

I. MAKE CHAOS THEORY YOUR FRIEND

You've noticed that this book is not one of those "find a job in twenty-four hours" guides or a compendium of innumerable resources or suggestions for places to work. There's a reason for that: chaos theory. It's too complex. There is no way one book can reach everyone's needs, particularly when it comes to providing resources for every possible career field. And with everything changing so quickly, any websites or references I might recommend could easily

be gone by the time you read this. I chose to teach you to fish rather than handing you the fish, with the confidence that you're smart enough not to starve while you find that first fish. There are literally hundreds of books and thousands of websites that can connect you to the most current information about paths you want to follow. And being a Wise Wanderer, you're an expert at researching and experimenting already.

The mindsets and skills you have developed through the metaphor of chaos theory will help you navigate any choppy waters you encounter in the future. You might be interested to know that chaos theory is increasingly appearing in articles about management due to the frequent change and complexity in the world. New trends emerge constantly and companies have to be chaos based to handle the changes. Regularly assess what you know, what you don't know, and what you need to find out. Consider possible outcomes and create scenarios that will help you predict the future (but don't try to see too far ahead!). Build up your personal and professional resilience so that you can handle job or even career changes with aplomb.

2. YOUR ATTITUDE (MINDSET) IS EVERYTHING

Don't sabotage your own potential for success by focusing on what's not working or how bad things are. The parent of a recent graduate once called me, frustrated because her daughter couldn't find a job in Denver. She insisted (and wanted me to agree) that there were *no* jobs at all in Denver. I hadn't seen that on the news—and believe me, if there were *no* jobs in Denver, it would make the news. Unfortunately, this mother was actually enabling and reinforcing her daughter's negative attitude and fueling her feeling of being stuck. Remember that even when there's a 6 percent unemployment rate, there's a 94 percent employment rate among those who want to be employed. And anyway, those are just general statistics that may or may not apply to the field or geographic location you're in.

You have to look at what is under your control and work with that. You might say "I'd like to find a job in the nonprofit sector, but there's nothing open." Is that really true? Is there absolutely nothing, no way, no how that you could do to move toward the nonprofit field? There are no agencies in your town? There are no volunteer

opportunities? Really? A finalist on the TV show *Last Comic Standing* talked about how he worked at a radio station doing a show for two years for free until he had perfected the skills (and the courage) he needed to start doing stand-up comedy. *For free.* (He bartended to make money.) And when he was onstage as a finalist for *Last Comic Standing*, I suspect he didn't have one second of regret for those two years.

3. KEEP YOUR FOCUS ON LESSENING THE GAP BETWEEN WHERE YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU WANT TO BE

Keep conducting experimental wanderings that take you closer to your desired outcome. Experimental wanderings will help you particularly if you ask yourself one simple question on a daily basis: what can I learn today?

You never stop being a student. As you know, when you ask what you can learn, you focus on the knowledge and experience you're acquiring in order to make better decisions and find what you truly love to do. By always being a learner, you develop an innate curiosity that helps you become an expert in whatever subject you desire.

I used to joke with my students that most people spend their first job looking for their second job. The reality is a little more complex. Your first job after graduation is a start whether you know it or not. Even if it's a McJob and certainly not the job of your dreams, it still represents a step toward the next better job, and then the next. Don't ever assume you have reached your final destination, whether you're at your first job at twenty-two or your latest job at sixty-two. There's always more to come when you see yourself as a learner.

4. TRY TO ENJOY THE PROCESS OF THE JOB SEARCH AND YOUR CAREER

You've seen all those trite quotes about enjoying the journey as you get to your destination. That's all fine and dandy when you're confident you'll reach the destination. It's one thing to enjoy the journey of a study-abroad experience, knowing that you will return home and go back to school at some point. But how do you enjoy the

journey when you don't know your destination? Or when your destination seems unattainable? It's easy to fall into negative thinking patterns such as "the job search is too hard" or "it takes too much time." It might help to hear what alumni have said about the job search after it's over (these statements are from actual alumni surveys I've conducted):

"Writing my résumé was a real ego booster—I've actually done stuff!"

"I learned what's important to me."

"The process was actually a lot more creative than I thought it would be."

"Looking for a job helped me clarify my goals. I could see what I've done so far and it helped me figure out what I need to do."

"The alumni connections I made were friendly and helpful, and they gave me lots of ideas."

"I thought I had found a really neat job, but after I researched it, I learned I would hate that job."

"I discovered that interviewing is just a skill that can be learned."

"I developed a lot of confidence in myself."

"I had a horrible interview, but I survived and I learned I would never want to work for that company. I also realized that I was partly at fault, so I worked on my responses to typical questions and never had a bad interview again."

"The job search really helped me develop ambition."

If you're feeling isolated and alone in your search, see if you can connect with friends who are going through it as well, or seek out a local job support group. Knowing that others are going through what you're going through and helping other people with the process will make you less anxious and more confident. Just make sure whatever group you connect with has a lot of positive energy and focuses on the solutions rather than the problems.

5. KEEP YOUR FOCUS ON YOUR GIFTS, STRENGTHS, AND THREADS IN YOUR WANDERING MAP

Or as Glinda the Good Witch in *The Wizard of Oz* said, "You had the power all along, Dorothy." I couldn't have said it better. Keep developing your knowledge, skills, and talents.

6. MAKE SURE YOUR RÉSUMÉ, COVER LETTER, AND INTERVIEWING SKILLS ARE PERFECTED AND READY TO GO AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE

You know how those butterflies are—they flit in and out pretty quickly and if you're not ready for them, you might miss out on a great opportunity. Always keep "the Chicago Way" in mind.

7. SHOW UP AND PAY ATTENTION

Are you keeping your goals or intentions in your mind as you go about your day? In the movie *Peaceful Warrior*, Nick Nolte, who plays a character called Socrates, tells his college student protégé to "take out the trash." By that he means the student needs to eliminate all the clutter in his mind that is keeping him from truly focusing on what is important. And if getting a job, or getting a better job, is truly important to you, you too will need to take out the trash. Jobs and opportunities are out there waiting for you. You just have to show up and pay attention.

8. KEEP WANDERING AND CONDUCTING SMALL EXPERIMENTS

It's like following the instructions on the back of the shampoo bottle: lather, rinse, repeat. The experiments don't end when you leave school; in fact, they've just begun and it's through them that you'll discover your dream.

After graduating, Jessica decided she wanted to work in publishing, preferably in an international location. She was hoping to

return to London, where she had studied a few years earlier, but she was encountering the usual problem of working abroad: obtaining a work permit. She found an organization called BUNAC, which would make short-term work visas available, though the website stressed that most jobs were not professional or all that glamorous.

Jessica decided that it was more important to live in England than work in publishing, so she got the visa and left for London. With the help of the BUNAC agency, she found a roommate and a job waitressing at a pub. Not much glamour about it at all, but she was in England, which made it all worthwhile. Customers in the pub noticed her accent and would ask why she was working there. Jessica had her story ready. "Well, I love England and hope to stay here. But my real passion is publishing, and I'm hoping to find a job in that field even if I have to return to America. Thanks for asking."

She didn't ask anyone for a job; she didn't say anything beyond what she hoped to do. Sure enough, within a few weeks, someone she spoke to offered to connect her with a local publishing house. She got a job as an "Americanizer," someone who translates British English into American English. She translated several cookbooks, and the company liked her work so much they extended her visa.

Jessica ultimately married a British citizen, and while still keeping her American citizenship in case she decides to return, she is now a top editor at a children's book publisher in London.

9. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR CAREER SERVICES OFFICE

If you're still a student, use the services now, and if you've already graduated, find out what services are still available to you. The biggest job-finding mistake most students make is not using the services when they're easily accessible and free. You paid the tuition for them, so why not take advantage? Once you're out in the real world, you can end up paying hundreds of dollars for a private career counselor or coach. Why not get the most from the free services at your school? But don't just wander in and ask if they can help you "find a

job." Of course they can help you find a job. Be clear with them about what you want. Help them help you by setting some clear goals you would like to accomplish during your meetings with them. A better client makes a better career counselor and results in a better session.

10. IF THERE'S SOMETHING YOU REALLY WANT TO DO, DO IT

All his life, Ray Kinsella was searching for his dreams. Then one day his dreams came looking for him.

—TAGLINE FROM THE POSTER FOR *FIELD OF DREAMS*

Do you have a dream? Is it still just rattling around in your mind? Even if you can't do it as a full-time job, find time in your life for it. Try taking some small action to move toward it. When I wanted to become a published writer, I read tons of books on writing and publishing. Their advice could pretty much be summed up in one word: write. That's really the only way to be a writer. Don't wait for the job or the publisher or the agent. Just write. And as you write, you will develop your plan for moving forward with your writing, whether it's to a job in the publishing field or a job in law or psychology, or places unknown. You already own, or will soon own, everything you need to achieve your dreams. You have access to more wisdom than you currently use. Plan to act on your dreams and respond to the opportunities that come your way.