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The Life Wedge

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A photograph can connect then and now while celebrating the journey itself.

Forced to face the naked truth

IT REALLY ALL BOILS DOWN TO ONE'S 'DONATION' IN LIFE*

She answered the door naked. It was an awkward moment for my youngest brother and me. She was over 80.

We had come to mow our new neighbor's yard, but that didn't seem important to her just then. Instead, she thrust open the door, grabbed my arm, and pulled me inside. My brother, affixed to my other arm like a parasite, followed suit.

She directed us to sit on the couch, and, still in shock, we obeyed. When she disappeared into the other room,

my brother pressed his hand tightly against his baby-toothed grin and tried to control his giggles. I offered a kick in the shin to help him.

When she returned, she placed two bowls of ice cream in front of us, then sat down across the room to pull on her stockings. The plain vanilla scoops were a welcome relief from the awkwardness, and I focused intently on eating that ice cream slower than I had ever eaten anything before. Still, out of the corner of my eye, I caught her performing a sort of geriatric hop as she navigated her way into her girdle.

She disappeared several times more, returning each time with a new piece of clothing. While she buttoned, we nibbled on tiny spoonfuls, trying to make the ice cream last until she was fully clothed.

Finally dressed in a mismatched outfit, a wig perched on her head, she sat between us on the couch and guided us through an album of old photographs. Inside, the 80-year-old woman sitting next to us was nowhere to be found; instead, we saw black-and-white snapshots of a gorgeous woman, flanked by business executives, dressed in wools, silks, and other exotic materials completely foreign to two cotton-clad boys from Buck Creek. If not for the matching gap between her front teeth, I would never have guessed that the goddess in those pictures and the loose-skinned lady hobbling around that musty house were the same person.

When she opened the door, I wanted to run away from the woman who was our new neighbor, but when she cracked that photo album, I wanted to know the woman who inhabited those photos—the successful world traveler, the stately career woman, the well-kept woman with the porcelain skin. Where had she gone? It was as if she had taken life’s bus from the center of the world to the farthest reaches of oblivion, where she’d become our neighbor.

Today, years later, I still think about that lawn-mowing job. I sometimes ask myself, “Decades down the road, will I answer the door naked?” and “Will young neighbor kids not yet born find me delusional?” and “Will I one day be a stranger in my own land?” The question that grips me most, though, is this: “Am I striving for goals today that I’ll discover matter little when I reach life’s twilight?”

That twilight may come at 99, as it did for my great-grandmother, or it may come “mid-life,” as it did for my father. Although most of us would prefer a long life, Catherine Marshall offers a valuable perspective on longevity in her book, *A Man Called Peter*, about her husband Peter Marshall, the U.S. Senate Chaplain who passed too soon. “It’s not one’s duration in life that matters,” Marshall writes, “it’s one’s donation.”

Lisa Beamer, wife of Todd Beamer, one of the heroes of September 11, reflects on her husband’s early passing in her book *Let’s Roll*. She relates that on his office inbox, Todd had taped the well-known quote from Theodore Roosevelt: “The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena . . . Who strives valiantly, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in worthy causes. Who, at best, knows the triumph of high achievement and who, at worst, if he fails, fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.” His duration in life was far too brief, but he put himself in the arena, and his donation was enormous.

I occasionally read Martin Luther King’s “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech, which he delivered the evening before his assassination. After expressing gratitude for great civil rights gains, he said, “Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But

it doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountaintop. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. . . .”

From Marshall and Roosevelt to King and Beamer, and from our aging neighbors, too, we learn that we should give first-rate priorities to first-rate causes. One day, whether we’re giving our last address to a Senate floor, staring down a terrorist, delivering our own “Mountaintop” speech, or dipping ice cream naked, we’ll have expended our life’s best energies.

We’ll all look back at life’s photos and either smile or glance away. My neighbor saw something in her pictures that framed her life’s fulfillment. That gaze in her eyes erupted into a smile—a beacon of pride.

In retrospect, I witnessed a royal moment. In our youth, we’re distracted by nakedness, however innocent. As we mature, we should be more preoccupied with the naked truth, whatever it may reveal.

AUTHOR’S COMMENTS

I received a flood of comments after a version of this article appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* (on March 4, 2003, used here with permission). I wish I had space to share all of the hilarious stories—and also the touching memories. One of the funniest calls I received was from a dear friend, Katie Beaver, the 90-year-old matriarch of our church, whose husband served as its first pastor. She stood around five feet tall, with a baritone laugh that would fill any room. Katie announced on the phone: “Jerry, this is Katie. I read your article.” She paused, and I began to sweat. Then she blurted out, “Just wanted to let you know I still have my clothes on! . . . Gotcha!” Then she burst into laughter.

But she also paused again to say thanks and reflected a bit on her own personal journey. When she passed away a few years later, all who knew her knew she had lived a full and rich life.

QUESTIONS

1. Have you had an awkward or unique experience like that of the naked lady?
2. When you hear people reflect on their lives, what types of things do they seem to find the most joy in talking about?
3. What lesson can you take from the naked lady story that applies to your own life?
4. If you live to be 80 years old, what fulfilling memory would you like to see framed in your living room?

*Jerry Pattengale. *Chicago Tribune* (March 4, 2003): Section 1:13.

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Dreams: Drawing Your Life Wedge

Splitting Wood

When I was growing up in Buck Creek, Indiana, winter meant splitting wood. We heated our house with a wood-burning stove, and when I became old enough, it was my job to split logs into the firewood that would keep us all warm.

My father used his ax to cut down trees into logs, but he wouldn't let me use the ax to split the logs. I was too small, he explained, and the ax was too heavy and too sharp. "Besides," he said, "the ax sticks too easily in the wood. Go find yourself a good wedge, and use the sledge."

I don't think that sledgehammer was any lighter than the ax, but at least my fingers were safe. So, with those instructions, I set out to find myself a good wedge.

My father had accumulated quite a collection of wedges over the years, and I experimented with a few of them—different shapes, different sizes, different materials. Each one had a different effect on the log, and on me. If the wedge wasn't sharp enough, or if it was too wide, I could beat on it all day with that sledgehammer and hardly get it through the wood. With enough time and sweat, I could get the log split eventually, but I'd expend an awful lot of energy doing it, and the split wouldn't be very good.

After that first day of log splitting, I was ready to quit. My hands were blistered, my arms ached, and I'd managed to split all of three logs in four hours. But my father would hear none of it. "You'll figure it out," he told me. "Find yourself a good wedge."

The next day, I was back at it. Trial and error taught me which wedges worked best with which kinds of wood, but I finally learned that ultimately, the sharper and narrower the wedge I used, the easier it was for me to split wood. With each day, I got better at matching the right wedge to the right log, and I got better and faster at splitting the wood. Pretty soon, I started looking forward to the days when I had to split wood—I was having fun with it!

I still remember the day my father came over after an especially great day of splitting. A pile of firewood as high as my thigh stood perfectly split and stacked beside the chop block.

“Did you split all of those?” he asked.

I nodded and smiled.

“Today?”

I beamed. I had found myself a good wedge.

Why College?

Now you know how to split wood. But what, you may be wondering, does splitting wood have to do with college, or with being a motivated student?

The sarcastic answer is that unless you get motivated about being a college student, you better start learning how to split wood if you want to stay warm in the winter. But that’s not the serious answer.

However, before we get to the serious answer, we have to answer another question first: Why college?

The Practical Reason: Earning Power

All college students have their own personal reasons for going to college. For many, the decision is financially driven: They go to college to earn more money than they could without a degree.

Research by the National Center for Education Statistics shows a direct correlation between earning a college degree and increasing your earning power. In fact, in a 2005 study, they found that the median annual earnings of full-time, full-year workers between the ages of 25–34 years with only a high school diploma were \$26,800, whereas the median annual earnings for the same group with a bachelor’s degree or higher were \$43,100—a difference of \$16,300.

That difference might not sound like much. But start multiplying it. Over a 30-year career, that average difference adds up to \$489,000—almost half a million dollars! And that’s assuming those income figures never change. When you factor in inflation, plus the raises and promotions that a degree might help you qualify for, the difference could be significantly greater over your lifetime.

Looking at those numbers, it’s easy to see why someone might view college as a path to greater financial success. Choices you make now, such as what classes you will take, how hard you will work in them, the major you will select, and the basic decision to see college through to graduation, can impact your future financial status, including everything from the kinds of restaurants where you’ll be able to eat to the car you drive to the kind of house and neighborhood in which you live.

Just being a college student is a financial decision. For all students, it’s an expensive venture—even if you’re on scholarship. There are numerous costs associated with college, from tuition and fees to room and board to books and computers. There is also an opportunity cost: You are sacrificing many years from your working life! But when you think about the potential earning power you may gain with a college degree, it’s easier to see your education as not an expense but an investment, in yourself and in your future.

Figure 1.1 Salary Survey Based on Educational Levels

Median annual earnings of all full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34 years, by sex and educational attainment: Selected years, 1980–2004
(In constant 2004 dollars)

Year	All Education Levels	High School Diploma or GED	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Male			
1980	\$40,600	\$38,800	\$46,300
1985	39,100	35,200	48,200
1990	36,700	32,000	46,000
1995	34,200	29,700	46,400
2000	37,800	32,300	50,900
2001	37,600	31,400	51,200
2002	37,300	31,100	51,400
2003	36,600	31,000	49,600
2004	36,300	30,400	50,700
Female			
1980	\$27,600	\$25,500	\$34,100
1985	29,100	25,000	36,900
1990	28,900	23,700	38,800
1995	27,500	21,800	37,300
2000	30,100	23,500	39,900
2001	31,200	24,200	40,200
2002	31,600	24,600	42,000
2003	31,500	24,400	41,300
2004	31,000	24,000	40,300

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2006). *The Condition of Education 2006* (NCES 2006–071), Table 22-1. See <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=77>.

The Personal Reason: Interests and Passions

Maybe you're not motivated by financial concerns. Maybe you're in college because of a special interest or passion that you have. Perhaps you've always been fascinated by bridges and structures, and you want to learn civil engineering. Maybe you've always admired your teachers and want to pursue a degree in education. Possibly you have a passion for helping the environment, and you're in college to study biology, or ecology, or even political science. Or maybe numbers have always been your thing, and you think a career in accounting or the actuarial sciences might be for you.

Regardless of your interest or passion, college is where you can turn that interest or passion into a career. Through classes, labs, and internships, you'll learn about the subject at the highest levels and find out if that path is a good

fit for you. Many students enter college interested in pursuing one subject and find themselves more interested in a new subject they discover by taking a class that sounded interesting. Others find that upon closer examination, they're not as interested in a subject as they thought they were and switch paths, while still others find ways to combine new interests with the passions that motivated them to come to college in the first place.

While focus is certainly an important skill to learn in college, being open to new ideas, classes, and subjects will help you learn which career path is right for you and will make you a well-rounded thinker and learner, which will serve you the rest of your life.

The Other Reason: Finding Your Way

What if you've gotten to this point in the chapter, and you don't really have a financial motivation for being at college, and you don't exactly have a driving interest or passion either? What if you came to college because that's what your friends were doing, or because your parents pressured you to go to college, or because it seems like that's just what you're supposed to do after high school, or simply because you just don't feel ready to jump into the "real world"?

That's okay, too.

While many students enter college confident in their choice of major and career, many more enter college unsure of where it will take them. And while many of those students who arrive at college with their plan all mapped out do follow through on that path, many head in another—or several other—directions before finding their way to the podium at graduation. So if you're not sure exactly what your reason is for being in college, don't worry. You're there to figure out what's next for you—to find your way.

Fortunately, a college campus is a great place to find your way. It's filled with interesting classes, professors, and fellow students who will challenge the way you think, push you to prove yourself through hard work, help you learn how to learn, and open your eyes to new perspectives. College also brings opportunities to get involved in social groups and service groups and to make friends from a diverse student body.

Even if you have no idea what major you will choose, a college education can be a transformative experience and a solid foundation for success, no matter what your path or how winding that path may be.

Journal Entry: Your Reason for College

Throughout the course of this book, you'll be asked to make journal entries. Keeping a journal and writing in it regularly is a helpful way to personalize what you learn, to remember major concepts, to think more deeply about the information that's been discussed in the book or in class, and to keep a record of the evolution of your thinking over a period of time. If you find journaling as useful and valuable as I have, you may feel inspired to write in your journal beyond the assigned journal entries. If so, go for it! The more you journal, the more you will get out of the journaling process, and the more helpful your journal will become.

Essentially, a journal is any place where you record your thoughts about a topic. Today, many people journal publicly through blogging, while many still journal privately in notebooks or on their computers.

I encourage you to keep a journal that is dedicated to this class exclusively, but the type of journal you keep is up to you—some people prefer a notebook that they can carry with them and write in with pen or pencil, while others prefer to type their thoughts rather than handwrite them, and so keep their journal on a computer, either in a word-processing document or in a public or private blog online. Whatever method you choose, be sure that you can access your journal easily and often.

Once you've decided how you will keep your journal, take a few moments to complete the following exercises for your first journal entry.

1. Make a list of the top three reasons you came to college. (Leave space in your journal below each reason.)
2. Next to each reason, rate, on a scale of 1–10, how much this reason motivates you to succeed in college.
3. Below each reason, write a few sentences to explain why you are motivated by that reason.

The Dream

Now let's take a step back from thinking about why you're in college for a moment. (Don't worry, we'll get to wood chopping soon enough.)

Let's think bigger than college, bigger than your first job out of college, bigger than your first apartment or your first car. Let's think about *the dream*.

What is the dream?

Although the mention of “dreams” often conjures visions of fantasy, dreams can be associated with your personal fortune. Who do you want to be when you grow up? What kind of life do you want to lead? What is your dream job? The answers to these questions might seem disconnected from your day-to-day activities, but your ability to dream—to envision clearly an ideal future that inspires and excites you—can help you find the motivation to act and make the decisions that will lead you toward the rich and full life you imagine.

The Making of Dreams

Dreams, and dreamers, often get a bad rap in today's society. Dreamers are often portrayed as hopeless romantics with their heads in the clouds, out of touch with reality. But where would we be without dreamers and their dreams? The great American poet Carl Sandburg once wrote, “Nothing happens unless first a dream.” Indeed, almost every great institution and invention we enjoy today, nearly every victory of social justice, every scientific breakthrough, every artistic triumph, and every athletic championship began with a dream.

The true power of dreams is their ability to give you a guided passion. No matter your academic or economic background, guided passion—a motivation to work toward achieving your dreams—can help provide you with the focus and drive you need to succeed, in college and in life. In fact, research shows that students who have a general understanding of their life purpose (and, in turn,

the purpose of their education) are much more likely to succeed in college. Those students are also likely to develop a viable plan for a career path—one that will provide earning power as well as personal fulfillment.¹

Understanding Dreams and Dreammaking

You may have never sat down with pen and paper and formally “dreamed,” but certainly you’ve had wide-awake dreams at some point in your life. Maybe they were just fleeting daydreams, or maybe they were detailed and involved. Maybe you dreamed of something you just hoped might happen, or maybe you dreamed of something you believed would happen if you worked for it.

Examining dreams you’ve already dreamed can help you develop new dreams. Take a few moments now to think about things you’ve dreamed about in the past. In the grid below, write down the first three dreams that come to mind that you’ve dreamed about in the past. Then, in the middle column, write down if the dream came true (if it still might, you can write “not yet”). Finally, in the right-hand column, if the dream came true, write why you think it did, or if it did not, why you think it did not.

Figure 1.2 Dream Grid

Past Dreams:	Came True?	Why or Why Not?
1.		
2.		
3.		

Mature Dreams vs. Immature Dreams

Now I’d like you to look at those dreams you wrote down through another lens: maturity.

The maturity of a dream—whether it’s an immature dream or a mature dream—is not determined by how old you are when you dream it. Rather, the maturity of a dream is determined by how serious you are about pursuing it, how willing you are to act on it, and, indeed, whether or not you have acted on it already.

¹A 2005 study conducted jointly by Indiana University and Indiana Wesleyan University reveals that an intentional curricular program designed to help students determine their life purpose correlates with radically higher graduation rates. (Leaders of the research team include Drs. Edward St. John [University of Michigan], Don Hossler and Jeff McKinney [Indiana University], and Jerry Pattengale and Bill Millard [Indiana Wesleyan University].)

In other words, an *immature dream* is just wishful thinking, but a *mature dream* is one that puts passion into action.

Seen through this lens, the maturity of a dream is then not only about the dream but also the dreamer.

Let me give you an example. Thanks to the early rounds of *American Idol* auditions, every new season brings us a reminder of the thousands of people who think they have what it takes to be pop stars but are, for all intents and purposes, tone deaf. Think about the people who are subjected to ridicule in those early rounds: They sing off key, they don't know the words, and they ultimately embarrass themselves because they look like they've never sung into a microphone before.

When they walk into that audition room, they have a dream—becoming the next American Idol. But if they have no experience singing other than in their cars with the radio turned all the way up, if they've never taken a single voice lesson, and if they've never performed in front of a live audience, their dream is immature. It sure would be nice if it came true, but it's not very likely.

The *American Idol* finalists, however, are another story altogether. Take Kelly Clarkson, the winner of the first season of the show in 2002. Kelly started singing in the school choir in seventh grade. She sang in shows and musicals throughout high school. She had classical voice training. She wrote dozens of her own songs. When she walked into that audition room, she had a dream, too—a mature dream that she'd been working toward, in measured steps, for years. When her opportunity came, she was ready.

Journal Entry: The Maturity of Your Dreams

Now that you understand the difference between a mature dream and an immature dream, take a look back at the three dreams you wrote down in the previous exercise. Would you categorize them as mature or immature? Mark either an "M" or an "I" next to the dream in the column on the left to indicate whether you think the dream is mature or immature.

Next, look at the column on the right—the why or why not column. Think about what you wrote there in terms of mature dreams versus immature dreams. How does the maturity or immaturity of the dream relate to why the dream has come true or not? Take a few moments to write your thoughts in your journal.

In Defense of Immature Dreams

I want to clarify a few things before we move forward: First, it's perfectly all right to dream immature dreams. They're fun to dream, and there's no harm in, say, imagining what you might do if you won the lottery. Immature dreams can also help you develop your imagination, a valuable skill that can prove helpful when you focus it on pursuing a mature dream. That imagination that you've sharpened dreaming immature dreams might help you find a creative solution that will lead to the achievement of a mature dream. So go ahead and dream those dreams. Just remember they're not the only kind, and don't expect that simply dreaming them will make them come true.

Second, immature dreams don't have to stay immature forever: They can grow up and turn into mature dreams. Let's say, for example, that ever since you were a kid, you've loved fast cars and powerful engines, and you want to be an automotive engineer. You declare engineering as your major as a freshman, and you're ready for the fast track. However, you fail your first semester of college math.

Does this mean the dream of being an engineer is over? No.

But shouldn't you be able not just to pass, but excel at math to be an engineer? Well, yes.

So how is that not the end of the dream?

Well, it's the end of the immature dream. It's time for you to either give up on that immature dream or force it to grow up. It's time to reexamine that dream and see if you understand what it takes to make it a reality and decide if you are willing to put in the work necessary to pursue it. If you're willing to take that math class again, and study twice or perhaps three times as much as you did before, and you're willing to get a tutor for the class and meet with the professor during office hours and do your homework with a study group so that you not only pass the class but master the concepts taught in it, and you're willing to put in that kind of work for the math and engineering classes that will follow, that immature dream just might grow up.

If you're not willing to do those things, maybe you just like fast cars. You can always watch car races on TV.

What I'm trying to say is, a setback is just a setback. Don't let it kill your dream. Instead, let that setback be the wake-up call you need to help that dream mature.

Pursuing Mature Dreams

Helping an immature dream grow up is one way to dream a mature dream. But that can be a bit of a long route to get to a mature dream. Let's take a more direct route.

Think now about what *you* really like to do—the things that make you get out of bed in the morning, that quicken your pulse, that make you smile, that give you hope. Whether you are 19 or 49, if you can begin to understand what fulfills you, you're more likely to choose dreams that match up with what motivates you. Thinking about it in the context of college, having the right dreams for you can help you choose the right major for you, which can help you find connections with your assignments, which can help you find the motivation and energy to do them well, all of which can ultimately help you to stay in school through to graduation.

Journal Entry: Dreaming Mature Dreams

Here it is: your invitation to dream a little dream. In your journal, take a few moments to think about two dreams: a personal dream and a professional dream. The personal dream can be about your family, your dream house, or a trip you've always wanted to take. The professional dream can be about your dream job, starting your own company, teaching high school, or being featured on the front page of the newspaper.

Below each dream, write down how mature that dream is right now and explain why. How much thought have you put into that dream? How much research have you done into what is needed to accomplish it, and how much research needs to be done? How detailed is your plan for achieving that dream, and what still needs to be planned?

Even if the dream is not especially mature at the moment, take some time to help it grow up a bit. Think about the things you will need to do to accomplish each dream, and write them down.

The Struggle

How do you feel about those dreams you just wrote down? Is it exciting to see them on paper? Writing out your dreams not only helps you remember and visualize them, it can also be the first step to achieving them. I know when I write down my dreams, they feel more real, and I feel like I'm on my way.

Then I remind myself that writing my dreams down is the first step, not the last. Between those steps, between you and the attainment of your dreams, lie many challenges. Accomplishing most dreams requires hard work, patience, persistence, sacrifice, and incredible commitment. On the way, you're likely to face setbacks, suffering, and loss. Perhaps you'll doubt yourself. Perhaps you'll doubt your dream.

No matter what obstacles you face on your way to realizing your dream, you won't be alone. Few dreams are ever handed to anybody on a silver platter. Achieving most dreams requires a struggle.

I think that's a good thing. The tougher the struggle, and the more you have to prove yourself, the more you will learn and grow on the way, and the more you will appreciate the dream once you get there. Ultimately, though, if you're going to get there, the dream must be stronger than the struggle.

I'm going to repeat that, because it's a key concept to this book:

The dream must be stronger than the struggle.

Stronger Dreams

What makes a dream strong—strong enough to overcome the struggle? Believe it or not, you've already taken the first step in making your dream strong: You've written it down. Seeing the dream clearly is critical to achieving it. That means not only dreaming it but being able to visualize it, being able to articulate it to yourself and others, and writing it down.

Once you're clear about what you want, you have to think about what it will take to get there. You need a plan. To develop that plan, start by asking yourself the following questions:

- What steps do I need to take to achieve this dream?
- When do I need to take those steps?
- What resources (financial, personal, physical, etc.) do I need?
- What skills do I need to achieve my dream?

- How many of those skills do I currently possess?
- Which skills do I need to develop?
- Where can I learn and practice these skills?
- Would a mentor (or multiple mentors) help me achieve my dream?
- If so, do I have that mentor? Have I talked with my mentor about my dream?
- If not, where can I find a mentor? How soon do I need to identify one?
- Who else besides a mentor can help me achieve my dream?
- Have I told these people about my dream? Have I asked for their help?
- What obstacles might I encounter on the way to the dream?
- How do I plan to overcome those obstacles?

The more of these questions you can answer, the stronger your dream will become. Even if you don't know a lot of the answers to these questions right now, you do know what you need to do first—find the answers to these questions. Your search for answers may take you to the library, to your professors or advisors, friends, bosses, or family members. As you gather answers, information, and resources and develop your plan, remember that the more detailed the dream, the more real it will become to you, and the closer you will be to achieving it.

Of course, a plan is not a guarantee of success. New businesses are a perfect example of this. While we often hear about the successful start-ups and the entrepreneurs who founded their business in a garage and turned it into a multimillion-dollar company, the number of new businesses that fail annually is daunting—even ones with sound business plans. Hong Kong, long considered a prize international marketplace, averaged 15,884 bankruptcies annually during 2001–2006.² We can only assume that most of these were serious endeavors, mature dreams backed by considerable planning.

While planning can't overcome every obstacle, it is still the critical first step in pursuing any dream.

Journal Entry: Developing a Plan

In your journal, go back to the personal and professional dreams you wrote down earlier. On a new page, write one of those dreams (personal or professional, your choice) at the top of the page. Below it, answer as many of the questions in the section above as you can. Brainstorm ideas that you will need for your plan, and identify the details you know and the information you will need to find. For the latter, write down where you will look or with whom you might talk to gather that information.

Once you've completed that exercise for the first dream, take a few minutes to go through the same process with the second dream. You'll develop these plans further at the end of the chapter.

²Official Receiver's Office: The Office of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region; see www.oro.gov.hk/cgi-bin/oro/stat.cgi?stat_type=W&start_year=1989&end_year=2007&end_month=2&Search=Search.

The Motivation of Mature Dreams

A plan is critical for accomplishing your dream. Equally important is the motivation to execute that plan.

I believe a prerequisite for finding that motivation is that the dream is your dream. Many people choose majors or even careers to please someone other than themselves—parents, for example. I understand why this happens, but I encourage you to make sure that your dreams are your own. It can be challenging enough to find the energy and motivation to pursue your own dream. If you are following someone else's dream, summoning the motivation may be even more difficult, and you might soon find yourself questioning the time, energy, and effort you're putting forth. With so many things out there that can trip up your dreams and add to the struggle, don't add another one if you can avoid it. Make your dreams your own, so the motivation can be yours as well.

Motivation is key to achieving your dreams because the energy needed to pursue them is significant. Some days you won't feel like doing the hard work. Some days you won't even feel like getting out of bed. Some days you'll think about letting the setbacks win.

Overcoming those setbacks, getting out of bed, doing the hard work—in other words, mustering the energy to achieve your dream—are easier if you have many things motivating you toward accomplishment.

For example, when I was in high school, my dream was to earn a letter in football. My motivation for that dream was mixed. Because I was smaller than most of the other boys, I was driven by an inner or *internal* desire to overcome the odds against a player my size making the team, let alone playing. I was also motivated by an outer desire or *external* reward—to earn that letter and wear it proudly on my jacket. The motivations were linked, as the letter became for me a symbol of the internal goal. Having two motivations to pursue my dream made the dream stronger.

Although we live in an era in which our most precious natural resource, fuel, is becoming more and more scarce, it's exciting to realize that our own reserve of energy is renewable.

Your energy belongs on a short list of “intangible” assets that stays with you wherever you go and that never belongs to anyone else. Combined with your knowledge and skills, your energy is a resource that is invaluable not only in reaching your dreams, but in moving forward civic and humanitarian causes as well.³

The late Edward “Chip” Anderson, long-time professor at UCLA and Azusa Pacific University, had a great saying about the impact of motivation on achieving dreams. “If the Why is big enough,” he used to say, “the How will show up.”⁴

³This “intangible” concept is introduced in Tim Sanders' *Love Is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends* (New York: Random House), 2002.

⁴This statement was commonly shared by the late Edward “Chip” Anderson, long-time professor at UCLA and professor at Azusa Pacific University. He helped to establish Gallup's *StrengthsQuest* program.

Journal Entry: The Motivation Behind Your Dreams

Realizing future aspirations isn't an accidental thing, and neither is finding a life goal or dream. Take a few moments now to examine the motivations behind your aspirations and dreams, to understand better your passion and to assess the strength of those dreams.

In your journal, go back to the plans you wrote out for your personal and professional dreams. Underneath those plans, list your motivations for accomplishing those dreams.

My Dream Come True

This book is part of my dream. Like most dreams, it didn't come true overnight.

I began seeing connections between dreams and accomplishments early in my career, finding patterns that could and should be taught in the college or corporate setting. I conducted research into the phenomenon and began to develop a program using the lessons I learned. I've had the opportunity to share that program with more than 6,000 students, and over an eight-year period, the college that used this program saw the number of students who stayed in school through graduation increase by 20 percent. In other words, by applying the ideas and lessons you're reading in this text, 1,200 more students remained in school. I've seen it myself: Discussion of dreams, life goals, and "life purpose" issues makes a difference.

Of course, the book didn't write itself. It has taken seven years from my first draft until finally seeing this book through to publication. Now that you're holding this book in your hands, you're part of my dream, too—to help college students use the power of dreams, goals, and motivation to succeed in school, and beyond. Thank you.

Honoring Your Dreams: The Drum Principle

A few years ago, after I had just given a speech about the importance of having dreams, a recent high-school graduate named Tad came up to me and excitedly told me about his dream: being a professional drummer.

"That's great, Tad," I said. "How many hours are you practicing a week?"

"Well, Dr. Pattengale," he replied, "I've been really busy working, so I haven't had a chance to practice much lately."

I nodded understandingly, but I was already growing suspicious. "Tell me, Tad," I probed, "What type of drums do you have?"

"Well, Dr. P.," he responded sheepishly, "I'm actually a bit short on money right now, and I had to sell my drums."

"Huh," I said. "Well, I saw you drive in tonight in a new Suburban. Is that yours?"

"Yeah! Do you like it? I've always wanted one, and there's plenty of room in the back for my drum set."

Unfortunately, there wasn't enough room in his wallet for his drum set, and there wasn't enough time in his days to practice. He said his dream was

to be a drummer, but he chose to spend his precious hours and dollars on other things.

“I do like it, Tad,” I told him. “But it sounds to me like you sold your drummer dream for a gas-guzzling machine that’ll be rusted out in a few years.”

“Oh, no, Dr. P.,” he quickly replied. “I got it rust-proofed.”

I smiled. “Well, that’s good for your truck,” I said. “But is it good for your drumming career? I worry that unless you sell that Suburban and put the money toward a new drum set, you’ll never become a drummer.”

“Oh, no, Dr. P.,” Tad said assuredly, “I just need a little more time to get around to it.”

That conversation took place over 20 years ago. Tad never did get around to it; he’s still not a drummer. He doesn’t have that Suburban anymore, either, but what’s worse is that he dropped out of college because he couldn’t afford the tuition payments and the car payments. The last I heard, Tad is paying the bills, but unfulfilled in his job.

Maybe Tad never would have become a professional drummer, even if he had sold that Suburban and bought a drum set. But maybe his pursuit of that dream would have led him to another career in music, like being a record producer or studio engineer, teaching music, or helping people through music therapy. Maybe he would have opened a store that sold drum equipment, or maybe he would be writing movie scores and soundtracks. But the choices he made about how to spend his time and money sidetracked him not only from his dream but from all the other opportunities he may have discovered along the way, engaging in what I call the *Drum Principle*.

Then again, maybe Tad could have become a professional drummer. And though he’s not as young as he used to be, it’s not too late. But unless he rethinks his priorities and his life choices, he’ll never know.

Personal Alignment

Am I suggesting that Tad is a bad person, or that Tad is a failure in life? No. I’m not suggesting that Tad’s choices—to drop out of school, to buy a nice car, to sell his drum kit—are necessarily bad choices, either. They may be the right choices for some people in some circumstances.

However, those choices were bad choices for Tad’s dream of being a professional drummer. And while I haven’t had the chance to ask him about it, my guess is that Tad might be disappointed in himself for failing to commit the time and energy necessary to pursue his dream honestly—for failing to make choices that supported his dream.

When your actions match your words, you are practicing *personal alignment*. In other words, the choices you make are aligned with the dream you wish to pursue.

Failing to align your choices with your dreams makes it very difficult to achieve those dreams. Think of a car whose wheels are out of alignment. It’s difficult to steer, and whether it pulls to the right or it pulls to the left, you’ve got to work extra hard just to keep the car out of the ditch and on the road, let alone get it where you want to go.

Pursuing your passion works the same way. If you dream of going to graduate school, but you're choosing to spend time watching TV with friends rather than spending extra time in the library, you may be out of alignment. As you consider decisions, from when and how much to study to which courses you take each term, keep your dreams in mind, and work to align those choices with them.

To give your dream a chance to come true, you need to pay attention to all the small tasks that are connected to that dream. Put another way, *you need to pay serious attention to those tasks connected to a serious dream!*

The Wedge Principle

Remember the wedge? You know, from the wood-splitting story? Let's come back to that now.

Back in Buck Creek, I learned that a sharp, narrow wedge would help me get through the wood and achieve my goal of keeping our house warm faster, and with less wasted effort, than if I used a dull, wide wedge. In an auditorium in the 1970s, I learned that the same principle applies in life.

The speaker, Dr. Keith Drury, took a piece of white chalk and drew a giant "V" on the blackboard. Your life, he explained, is like a wedge.⁵ The more narrow it is, and the more sharp and focused its point, the more likely you are to reach your goals.

Unlike my father, Dr. Drury didn't tell me to go find myself a good wedge—he told me to make my life into a good wedge. Here's how he explained it.

First, I had to know my goal. When I was splitting wood, that was defined for me—I wanted to get through the wood so I could heat the house. But much like the kind of wood determined what kind of wedge I should use, Dr. Drury explained that the kind of goal determined what belonged in my wedge. What went "in" the wedge was determined by the choices I made about how to spend my time, and, indeed, my life. I began to understand what he meant: If I knew my goal, and I chose my activities so they were focused on that goal, it would be easier to achieve that goal. But if I filled my wedge with things that were distractions from my goal, the wedge would get too wide, and achieving the goal would take more energy and more time, just like splitting wood with a dull, wide wedge.

This, then, is the essence of the **Wedge Principle**.

A Closer Look at the Wedge Principle

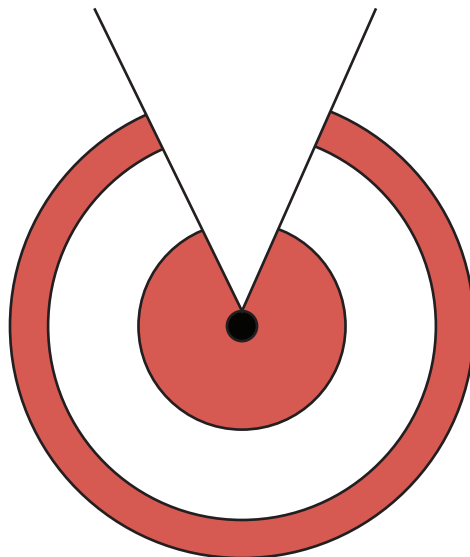
Let's look at a diagram of a **Life Wedge**, illustrated in Figure 1-3. Three main components make up the diagram: life purpose, life focus, and life gifts and life skills.



The right wedge achieves the goal efficiently and effectively.

⁵Keith Drury is an associate professor at Indiana Wesleyan University.

Figure 1.3 The Wedge Principle



Life Purpose: The Point of the Wedge

A wedge is built for a specific purpose. In wood-splitting, that purpose, like the tool itself, is simple: to split wood. Our Life Wedge is also built for a specific purpose, a purpose we alone decide. Once we identify a life purpose—the point of the wedge in both senses of the word—we can begin to fill our Wedge with the commitments and skills we need to move forward.

To build the right Life Wedge for the right purpose, think about personal alignment, which we discussed previously. Your dream, your major life goal, will help you determine whether you are forming a sensible and promising Life Wedge. You already have written down a personal dream and a professional dream, but perhaps you feel you have a bigger dream, a life purpose to which those other dreams lead. Maybe you have a heightened interest in a cause (e.g., defending human rights, providing equal access to education, curtailing drug traffic in your town) or a special interest in a field or career. If you don't have a driving passion or sense of life purpose right now, that's okay, too—you can apply the Life Wedge to a shorter-term purpose as well, like graduating from college.

Life Focus: The Breadth of the Wedge

If the wedge is too broad, it won't split the wood. Imagine trying to split a section of a tree with a broad wedge. You can take special aim, pound relentlessly for hours, and even skip meals to keep at it, but that wide wedge won't penetrate

the wood effectively, so despite all that exertion, you'll still have few results besides blisters at the day's end. Perhaps eventually the effort would force the wedge into the wood and split the tree, but that small success would come at great expense of energy and time.

Unfortunately, that's the way many students approach college: too many clubs, too many social events, too many odd jobs competing with classes . . . each of which makes their Life Wedge wider. For your Wedge to help you reach your goals, it must be narrow and focused enough to drive through challenges and distractions. You must be cautious and deliberate about what you put into your Life Wedge, or your commitments will sap your focus and take away from your effectiveness in achieving your purpose, the point of your Life Wedge.

Think about how you spend your time. Do you invest your time, or do you just "kill" time? How you spend your hours and days—in other words, what you put into your Life Wedge—affects your ability to attain your goals. Thus, you should fill your Wedge with commitments that move you closer to your goal. Not every activity must be focused on your goal, of course. You need to take care of yourself, not just by eating, sleeping, and exercising, but also by spending quality time with friends and family and pursuing hobbies and interests that make you happy. Those will ultimately support the pursuit of your dreams because they will keep you mentally and physically healthy and help you have the mental and physical energy to pursue your goals.

However, to ensure that your Life Wedge is sharp and effective, you need to whittle it down to specifics rather than thinking in broad, general terms. If the goal at the tip of your Wedge is too broad, or what you put into your Wedge is too general, you're going to be like me out there with that wide wedge, trying to split firewood. For your life goal or life purpose, and the corresponding Wedge, think *focus*. As you narrow your definition of what you want in life, you sharpen your Wedge.

Life Gifts and Life Skills: The Sharpness of the Wedge

If the wedge is dull, it takes longer to cut. Our Life Wedge must not only be narrow but sharp. Abraham Lincoln once wrote, "If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my ax." Imagine attempting to split wood with a wedge that's narrow and focused but rather dull. Once again, more swings are needed to complete the task. Often, a dull wedge can get stuck in the wood, a frustrating setback. A dull, narrow wedge is more effective than a dull, broad wedge, but when you add sharpness to the focus of the narrow wedge, now you're chopping wood.

The sharpness of your Life Wedge is determined by the seriousness with which you pursue the commitments that determine the Wedge's width. The *volume* of what you put in your Wedge determines its focus, but the *quality* of what you put in determines its sharpness. Your natural gifts, talents, personal strengths, learned skills, and educational training all impact sharpness. Reading outside-of-class assignments, attending on-campus lectures, attending study sessions, and meeting with professors during office hours all help keep you (and your Life Wedge) sharp.

Constructing an Instrument Panel

In a sense, the Life Wedge helps us find our bearings and have a clear picture of where we're heading. It can also help you find direction and decrease your sense of confusion, sometimes called feelings of *vertigo*.

Vertigo is a phenomenon frequently experienced by pilots; it refers to a state of imbalance, often described as a sensation of dizziness or whirling around. *Subjective vertigo* is a false sensation of movement in which the person feels he is spinning when he is not, whereas *objective vertigo* is a perception that surrounding objects are moving. Vertigo occurs for a number of reasons: fatigue, moving too quickly, loss of horizon, too much noise and vibration, fixating on one object at the expense of all else, and flickering lights.

Metaphorical vertigo is a phenomenon frequently experienced by modern students (and professors, too). Let's look at how some of the vertigo triggers are experienced in a campus setting and how we might avert them:

FATIGUE. Exhaustion dulls our senses and performance; it's not hard for me to tell when someone in my class is dragging. If I see students struggling to stay awake in class, or I notice poor performance, I'll ask questions about their schedule: "Walk me through a normal weekday," or "How long do you spend on the Internet each day?" Using the Life Wedge, we'll then look at their commitments and priorities and discuss how quality rest fits in to that equation.

MOVING TOO QUICKLY. We jump into commitments without thinking through the consequences for many reasons: enthusiasm, curiosity, guilt, believing we can do it all. Many students are especially interested in humanitarian service and will often jump headfirst into good works, even if the time commitment negatively impacts other facets of their lives. Before diving into a new commitment, think about your decision-making process. Are you making a decision, or just falling into something? How much time are you giving yourself to consider this decision? What steps did you use to decide? Have you considered the greater good you might do after college by investing more in your Life Wedge commitments right now?

LOSS OF HORIZON. When a student, like a pilot, loses a reference point for direction, the result is often wandering—and sometimes that wandering leads right out of school. If I observe such a lack of focus, I try to reconnect the student to his or her Life Wedge (or prompt the development of one) and link activities and commitments back to the Wedge.

TOO MUCH NOISE AND VIBRATION. We can all relate to mental overload, but it's not healthy in any sustained form. As James K. A. Smith, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, told me, "In order for me to write I need to get rid of all the chatter." I find that many of today's students, having grown up with e-mail, instant messenger, text messages, and cell phones, not to mention TV, the Internet, iPods, and video games, are so accustomed to constant chatter and distractions that they're unfamiliar with the calming (and focusing) effect of plain old silence. If I sense a student is suffering from chatter overload, I'll

ask, “When did you last experience extended quiet?” Sometimes this question gets the student to realize it’s been quite a long time and consider the benefits of seeking out a quiet place. We’ll also talk about how revisiting her Life Wedge might help bring some perspective to what seems to be a hectic time.

FIXATING ON AN OBJECT AT THE EXPENSE OF ALL ELSE. I’ve seen students encounter this hazard in numerous situations: in an intense dating relationship, as a member of a sports team in competition season, when making a new commitment to a campus organization, or when discovering a new social scene. In these and other similar cases, I often recommend that students talk with campus counselors when situations feel out of control. But here again, pausing to consider your Life Wedge can be helpful. In many cases, the person doing the fixating doesn’t realize it; if you find a friend in one of these situations, you may be able to help by suggesting he take a step back to consider his Wedge.

FLICKERING LIGHTS. Rex Miller likens this cause of vertigo, often from strobe lights or intermittent light seen through helicopter blades, to the “endless noise and vibration of experts on every issue.” He adds that “The media compound the problem by bombarding our attention with the flickering strobe light of daily crisis all day, every day.”⁶ However, if you’re going to lean successfully into your future, you need to concentrate on what Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, identifies as your sphere of influence. It’s easy to get distracted by various crises beyond your control, among roommates, distant relatives, or friends of friends. In these situations, consider how you prioritize your commitments in the light of others’ needs and how distractions might keep you from realizing your own dreams. I’ve found that when a student can move from, “I’m really worried about my roommate” to “I’m going to encourage my roommate to go to student counseling, so I can stop trying to solve all her problems and focus on my studies,” both the student and the roommate end up better off for it.

While these examples might seem like minor difficulties that are simply part of the student experience, the consequences of vertigo can be severe. According to author Ed Chinn:

Those suffering from vertigo lose all sense of vertical and horizontal orientation: they literally lose their alignment to, and placement in, the real world. Pilots suffering vertigo have flown their planes full throttle into the earth.

Because it represents the tyranny of the subjective, the only effective recovery from vertigo is an absolute, resolute, focused reliance on objective reality (such as an airplane instrument panel).⁷

Throughout the years, the Life Wedge has helped many students construct an instrument panel with which they can more calmly and confidently navigate their lives.

⁶M. Rex Miller, *The Millennial Matrix: Reclaiming the Past, Reframing the Future of the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), p. 3.

⁷Ed Chinn, quoted in Miller, *The Millennial Matrix*, pp. 2–3; the list of vertigo causes were also gleaned from this insightful section.

Moving Toward Your Ideal Wedge

All this talk about the Life Wedge may make it seem as though all you have to do is scratch one out on a piece of paper and start living it. But as you've probably guessed by now, it's not quite that easy.

You essentially have two versions of your Life Wedge: your ***Ideal Wedge*** and your ***Real Wedge***. Your Ideal Wedge is your Life Wedge as you would like it to be, in an ideal future state, whereas your Real Wedge is the Wedge that reflects how you're actually spending your time and prioritizing your energies right now. Let's compare the two.

Your Ideal Wedge Chart

You've spent time already in this chapter writing about your dreams, your plans, and your motivation. Using these dreams, or a bigger life purpose if you prefer, complete the Ideal Wedge chart with the commitments, activities, relationships, and causes that would go into your Ideal Wedge.

Your Real Wedge Chart

Your Real Wedge chart records what you're actually doing with your time—what you're actually putting into your Wedge at this moment in time. Completing a Real Wedge chart can be extremely valuable in helping you gain perspective on how effective you are and where you might need to sharpen your Wedge to move it closer to your Ideal Wedge. In a sense, a Real Wedge chart is a way

Figure 1.4 Ideal Wedge Chart

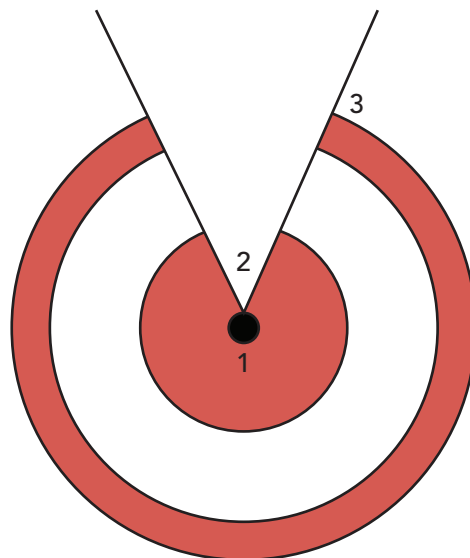
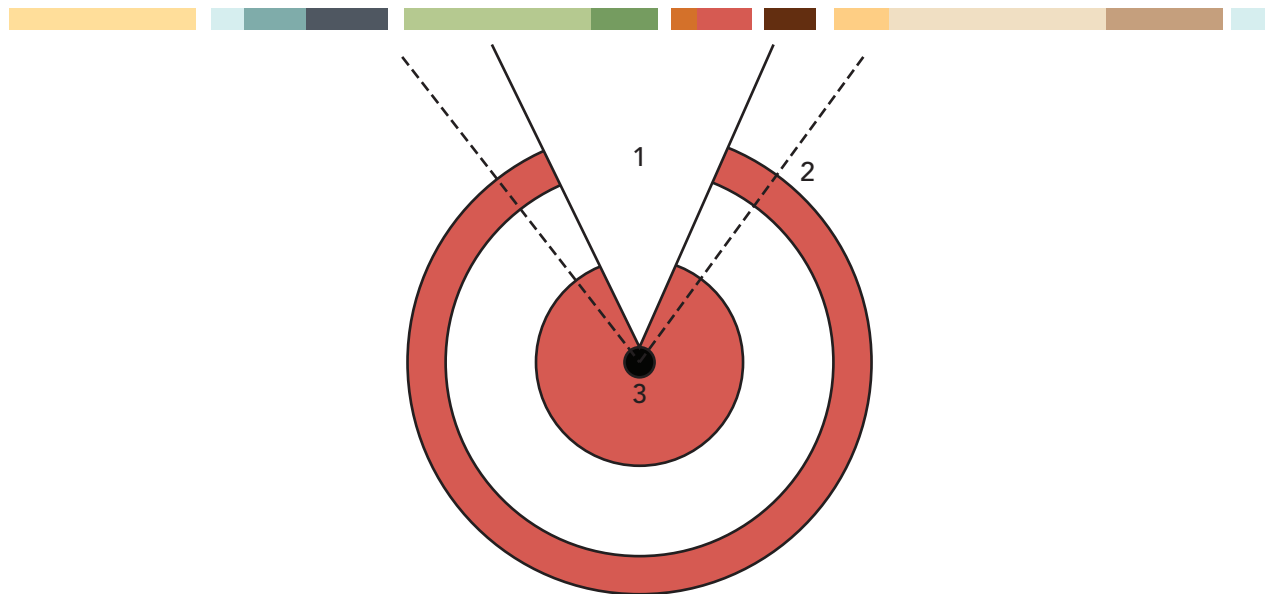


Figure 1.5 Real Wedge Chart



to visualize your current priorities. How these priorities rank in your life determines how close or how far you are to building a path and reaching your life goal.

Complete the Real Wedge chart above, entering the activities, commitments, and priorities on which you currently spend your time and energy. Be honest with yourself—the more accurate a picture your Real Wedge chart is, the more you'll be able to improve upon it.

Closing Thoughts on the Wedge Charts

If your Real Wedge doesn't look very much like your Ideal Wedge right now (and it probably doesn't), don't feel bad. But do understand that if your Real Wedge doesn't start transforming into your Ideal Wedge—if you don't connect your Real Wedge with where you want to go—you're going to have a difficult time making real progress toward your life goals.

Too often, I look at people's Real Wedges, and they are cluttered with things that have nothing to do with moving forward toward their goal. The exercise of completing these two charts can help you identify those things that don't help you move forward and those that do, so you can make smarter decisions about how to spend your time and build yourself the kind of Life Wedge that will be sharp enough, narrow enough, and strong enough to slice through even the toughest struggles as you work toward your dream.

The narrower and sharper your Life Wedge is, the better. You can keep it narrow not only by keeping in it the things that matter but by ensuring that what you put in your Wedge is well articulated and thought through—something to which you are truly committed. For example, you can put a mediocre performance in a class into your Wedge, but it won't strengthen or sharpen that Wedge nearly as much as doing the best you can in that class so that you can take what you learn there and apply it later.

Building your Life Wedge is a lifelong process because you will continually find ways to sharpen the Ideal Wedge, and, in turn, improve the Real Wedge. Also, your major life goal may change several times due to new learning experiences, enhanced personal strengths, or simply accomplishing goals you set earlier. The sooner you make the conscious decision to work on improving your Wedge, the more fully the passions and interests that you put into the Wedge can develop.

To paraphrase the Abraham Lincoln quote, invest time in sharpening your wedge. When it comes time to split wood, you'll have much more success.

Journal Entry: Questions to Help Sharpen Your Wedge

On a daily basis, ask yourself the following questions to help sharpen your Life Wedge. Writing these questions in your journal will help provide a regular reminder.

- Am I spending time on the tasks that narrow my Life Wedge, or widen it?
- What tasks from my Ideal Wedge can I incorporate into my Real Wedge? How?
- What tasks from my Real Wedge are widening or weakening it and distracting me from my goal? What can I do about them?
- If I keep wedging ahead with these priorities, where will I end up?

Chapter 1 Review

SUMMARY OF MAJOR CONCEPTS

- A college education can be a foundation for success, no matter your path.
- Dreams can give you a guided passion and help you find motivation to act.
- An immature dream is just wishful thinking, but a mature dream puts passion into action.
- The dream must be stronger than the struggle.
- “If the Why is big enough, the How will show up.”—Professor Edward “Chip” Anderson.
- Pay serious attention to those tasks connected to a serious dream.
- The closer your Real Wedge is to your Ideal Wedge, the more likely you are to reach your dreams.

KEY TERMS

immature dream a dream about the future that is essentially wishful thinking, with no plan in place to support it.

mature dream a dream that puts passion into action by developing the plans, strategies, skills, and resources needed to achieve it.

Drum Principle the principle that states that you need to pay serious attention to those tasks connected to a serious dream.

personal alignment when your actions match your words, and the choices you make are aligned with the dream you wish to pursue.

Wedge Principle the principle that states that just as a sharp, narrow wedge is more effective at splitting wood, a sharp, focused life is more effective at helping you reach your goals.

Life Wedge a visual representation of the Wedge Principle, containing three elements: life purpose, life focus, and life gifts and life skills.

vertigo a phenomenon that induces a state of imbalance, often described as a sensation of dizziness or whirling around; frequently experienced by pilots.

Ideal Wedge your Life Wedge as you would like it to be, in an ideal future state.

Real Wedge the Life Wedge that reflects how you’re actually spending your time and prioritizing your energies right now.

APPLICATION EXERCISE 1

Goal Setting

In the journal entry “Developing a Plan” that you completed earlier, you began to answer some of the critical questions that will help you create a plan to achieve your dreams.

While the dream is your *long-term goal*, you will need to reach a series of *short-term goals* along the way.

In the movie *What About Bob?*, Bob (played by Bill Murray) is a paranoid patient struggling to overcome his many fears and phobias. Psychiatrist Dr. Leo Marvin (played by Richard Dreyfus) encourages Bob to take “baby steps” to overcome his fears—to focus on the little things that he can handle rather than the big things that can seem overwhelming. In other words, rather than think about all the things that could go wrong on an elevator ride, he encourages Bob to focus on the small steps (literally) he needs to take to get him into the elevator and start the journey.

While the movie became a cult classic of slapstick comedy, the idea of “baby steps” clicked with millions of viewers. People understood that small, manageable steps line the path to bigger goals, which can seem scary and intimidating if you only look at the end result.

Now let’s take some of the items you outlined in your planning process in your journal and turn them into specific short-term goals—baby steps that you can take along the way to your dream. Below, or in your journal, identify three short-term goals that you feel can be accomplished by the end of this academic term. List them below and answer the following questions about them:

Short-Term Goal 1: _____

Target Completion Date: ____/____/____

Evidence that this goal is reached:

Possible steps to reach this goal:

- a)
- b)
- c)

Possible obstacles to reaching this goal:

Resources needed to reach this goal:

- a)
- b)
- c)

Short-Term Goal 2: _____

Target Completion Date: ___/___/___

Evidence that this goal is reached:

Possible steps to reach this goal:

- a)
- b)
- c)

Possible obstacles to reaching this goal:

Resources needed to reach this goal:

- a)
- b)
- c)

Short-Term Goal 3: _____

Target Completion Date: ___/___/___

Evidence that this goal is reached:

Possible steps to reach this goal:

- a)
- b)
- c)

Possible obstacles to reaching this goal:

Resources needed to reach this goal:

- a)
- b)
- c)

APPLICATION EXERCISE 2

Tracking Your Week

To know if you're spending your time wisely, you need to know exactly how you're spending it. An effective way to visualize your real priorities—what you're putting in your Real Wedge—is to track the time you spend over a week.

Figure 1.6 is a time-tracking chart you can use to track your hours. However, you may want to create your own version, using a spreadsheet program, that

Figure 1.6 Time Tracking Chart

Wedge Time-Tracking Sheet									
Time of Day (M–F)	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Time of Day (Weekend)	Saturday	Sunday	List Two Main Time Commitments per Time Bloc
7:00 AM to Lunch ()						7:00 AM to Lunch ()			1. _____ Amount of time: _____ 2. _____ Amount of time: _____
Lunch () to Supper ()						Lunch () to Supper ()			1. _____ Amount of time: _____ 2. _____ Amount of time: _____
Supper () to 10:00 PM ()						Supper () to 10:00 PM ()			1. _____ Amount of time: _____ 2. _____ Amount of time: _____
10:00 PM to 3:00 AM						10:00 PM to 3:00 AM			1. _____ Amount of time: _____ 2. _____ Amount of time: _____

At the end of the week, you'll be able to look at this chart and pick the items that are consuming most of your time. Since your weekends are likely much different than your weekdays, these are tracked separately. List the biggest consumers of your time within your Real Wedge—this is where you're actually spending your time. If you're having a difficult time listing anything of significance for a bloc of time, you might track your days literally by the hour. If you are not listing any concrete items, the implication is idle time (put "I"). Add your own abbreviations to simplify your tracking.

reflects the hours you are typically awake during the day. It will also be helpful to keep this chart with you, either on your computer or in your journal, so that you can enter your activities at several points during the day rather than trying to remember your whole day after you get home.

Track your time in reasonable segments (i.e., when you move from one activity to another), and, again, be honest. This tool will help you update your Real Wedge chart later in the book.

REMINDERS

As you consider your Life Wedge, when you sketch “V’s” on scrap papers, napkins, and other items, remember that there are two forms—the real and the ideal. The real reflects what you’re currently doing and the ideal helps you to envision where you want to be.