



# SET YOUR RBGS: REALLY BIG GOALS FOR A CAREER YOU'LL LOVE

Fran Hauser

# Most people don't have a hard time setting goals. In fact, many of us have a laundry list of them.

The challenge comes in creating goals that are grounded in purpose and will help you design a career you love. Enter: your really big goals (RBGs). RBGs are different from everyday goals because they are the ones that are going to have the biggest impact on your career. They're also action-oriented and very specific. "Getting a promotion" is a fine goal, but "becoming an expert in search engine optimization" (which will lead to a promotion) is strategic, purposeful, and clear. It's an RBG. RBGs are super important and are key to helping you focus on actions that are going to help move your career forward and—most important—in the direction that's right for you.

Setting RBGs in the following four areas can have an outsized impact on your career:

1. Value creation: doing things that create true value for your company or organization
2. Connections: growing and cultivating mutually beneficial relationships
3. Skills: leveling up on fundamental skills and ones that offer new opportunities
4. Brand: being intentional about what you want to be known for

## VALUE CREATION

Consider the question: “How can you become indispensable in your job?” If I could use only two words to answer that question, my answer would be: “Create value.” When you create value for your organization, it unlocks new opportunities for your career, whether you want to continue to grow at your company or you’re interested in moving in a different direction. This is especially true when you have something tangible that you can talk about or when others can clearly see the impact of your work.

Very early on in my career, I was working at Coca-Cola Enterprises in the finance department. My boss asked me if I would work with him to update the format of our quarterly financial report, which was long and hard to digest, and sent to very busy people (our board of directors and senior management!). We ended up shrinking the report to a small, easy-to-read pamphlet that provided the important takeaways, and I ended up winning an award for this work. I also realized that I was good at simplifying complicated things, which became what I was known for. This is a great example of what it means to do visible work that creates value, and ultimately resulted in a big promotion for me—at age twenty-seven—leading a team of 140 people.

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When thinking of how you can create value, consider these questions:

- What are your company's biggest goals and how can you have a direct impact on them? Some companies are great at communicating their goals; others not so much. If you're clear on what they are, great. Write them down and consider ways your work can impact these goals. If not, work with your manager to develop a specific goal for you that would benefit the company.
- Is there a high-profile project that you would like to be a part of? Make your case for why you would be a good fit for the team working on one of them and share the strengths you bring to the table. If you don't ask, the answer is always "No."
- Do you see a new business opportunity that you can pitch to your manager? For example, is there a new market or trend to capitalize on or a potential partnership that can accelerate growth? Do you have ideas about a breakthrough product or a new business model?
- Is there a way for the company/your department/your team to be more efficient? Do you have an idea that would reduce costs? This could be an actual reduction in costs or streamlining processes so that employees are more productive and have greater output.

Although you may not know the answers to some of these questions and you may have to go on a little bit of a fact-finding mission, be curious and open. Listen actively. Roll up your sleeves and dig in!

## How do you create value if you're in between jobs?

When my niece Sophie graduated from college with high honors in data analytics in May 2020, it was challenging to find a job related to her major. When she saw she was going to have to press “pause” on the job search until the world started to recover from the pandemic, she decided to pursue a few “side hustles” that would keep her engaged and generate income. She launched what became a very successful cheese board business called @boardsbysoph, took on social media management for others, and tutored high school students in math. All of these experiences contributed to her growth and gave her something interesting to talk about when her job interviews picked up again. She also met some really interesting people who opened doors for her. It took a lot of confidence, discipline, and a positive attitude to say, “Well, things didn’t quite go as planned, so what am I going to do about it?”

If you’re currently in transition, I know it can be hard to find good projects, let alone be strategic about choosing them. I also know that some of the best opportunities arose for friends of mine much later than they expected. Be patient, when possible, and keep fueling your passion. Start by brainstorming a project wish list. These could be volunteer projects, too. My friend Michelle worked for the United Way when she was in transition, and it was a wonderful way to build meaningful connections and skills while also feeling valued and purposeful.

How would you most like to spend your time? Which projects would make you feel the happiest and most satisfied? Which would be best to talk about in a job interview?

## YOUR CONNECTIONS

Your network is your lifeline. Building relationships and connecting with people is one of the most important ways to invest in yourself and your career. When I talk to fellow senior leaders, most of them say they wouldn't be where they are today without their incredible networks.

Stepping away from the computer, broadening horizons, and taking the time to meet new people can help your career, too. It's really hard to change a career or to grow in your own industry without a network of people to open doors for you. The things you learn from others while you're out networking can benefit you and your company, and building mutually beneficial relationships can assist you down the road.

I know I wouldn't have been able to make the pivots in my career without my network.

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One example of this happened in the spring of 2013 when I was at Time Inc. I was sitting outside the Time-Life Building, having coffee with my friend and start-up founder, Soraya Darabi. I often met with founders to discuss potential partnership opportunities with our brands. On an otherwise run-of-the-mill day, Soraya said something that would change the trajectory of my career. “Fran, there are so many women who are looking to launch businesses,” she said, “and when they look up, they don’t have any female role models or mentors, and you could be that.” With that, Soraya planted the seed of vision for me.

So I tested the waters by investing in and advising a few digital media start-ups on the side, and I quickly realized that this could become my full-time thing: I had the network and plenty of deal flow, and I was really enjoying it. This wasn’t just a happy coincidence. Prior to that coffee date, I realized that what I loved about my work was emerging technology and nonprofit opportunities. But when I looked at my network, it consisted of mostly (wonderful) media people. I wanted to learn more outside my industry, so I became strategic about seeking connections in those two sought-after spaces. You can do this, too. Depending on where you want to go in your career, you may need to build out different types of networks. (If you want to read more about my networking strategies, I wrote extensively about this in *The Myth of the Nice Girl*. It’s chapter 7.)

### **What is your higher-level vision in building out your network?**

What would help you love your career? How can connections help you get there? What’s your WHY when it comes to meeting new people and making connections? Once you have identified your RBG, think about who you could reach out to and organizations that host events that could align with your goals.

## YOUR SKILLS

Skills can be built in the natural course of your work. The more you do something, the better you get at it. But there may be skills that you need to build outside of your work. Perhaps you're working in marketing, and there is a new social media platform that you are not assigned to, but you know it's important for your career that you learn how to use it for brand building and sales. I remember very early on in my career when I was working in finance and accounting, activity-based costing became all the rage. It wasn't in my purview to learn this new skill at work, so I had to be proactive and learn it on my own. Taking that kind of initiative can have an upside, creating an opportunity to take a leadership role in introducing new technologies and processes to the company, or applying them elsewhere.

### **What are the skills that you would like to invest in?**

Start with where the opportunity is out in the world. Many resources available online report on the most valuable career skills based on industry and market trends. Talking to people you respect (both inside and outside of your company) is also a good way to gather data. Make friends with recruiters and grab a coffee with them once in a while. They have a wealth of knowledge when it comes to where the heat is in the market.

Think about essential skills you could improve on. Maybe they're soft skills like being a good listener or creating trust among team members; maybe they're fundamental skills for your job like public speaking or being a spreadsheet wizard.

For each skill, ask yourself two questions: Is the skill aligned with the career vision you have laid out and do you think you can be good at it? There are some things that–

no matter how hard I try—are really difficult for me to learn, and it’s not worth investing my time. For example, creating graphics for social media content takes me forever. I was wasting so much time trying to get the right look. I ultimately decided to hire an awesome intern to help me with this, and it’s been life changing. It leaves me time to focus on what I am good at. It’s important to be honest with yourself when you are doing this assessment.

## **YOUR BRAND**

Admittedly, branding is an overused word, but identifying a brand RBG for your career will inspire you to think about what you want to be known for or what makes you a sought-after employee.

### **What do you want to be known for?**

Tap into your natural skill set or passions and look for opportunities at your company to hone, share, and develop your unique knowledge and perspective. There is no brand without substance. Do you have a skill/secret sauce that you can package and train others on? Some companies have a formal training program that you could volunteer for, but you could also start an informal Lunch and Learn where each person brings a lesson to share.

**There is no brand without substance.**

If you want to reach even more people, consider creating, curating, or sharing on social media or another digital platform whatever it is you're passionate about. I met a young woman at Uber who shares fun reels on Instagram showing the behaviors that hold women back at work. They are engaging and smart and, by doing this, she is building her reputation as someone who cares about career building and equality at work. Likewise, I got my first book deal for *The Myth of the Nice Girl* because of a blog post I wrote for Forbes on "Nice Girls Finishing First." Leading with both kindness and strength is what I became known for in my career, and I felt that I had expertise to share. If this sounds like fun to you, pick a platform (it can be blogging, Instagram, even Twitter) and just start. See what resonates with people. This is not meant to stress you out or add another groan-worthy to-do to your list. Instead, think of this as an opportunity to create your own narrative. Have fun with it. You never know where this might lead.

You don't have to do all four RBGs at the same time. They're really big goals, after all! Even if you pick one area to start, this should feel satisfying, gratifying, and clarifying. I know that's a lot of -ings, but when you have an action plan and can see your RBGs on one page, it won't feel like work; it will feel like progress. That's why I designed my new book, *Embrace the Work, Love Your Career* as a guided workbook with a series of fun, thought-provoking exercises and plenty of space to help you work on them.

Remember, it's a fluid process. You can always revisit, update, and change your RBGs. You may start down one path before the light bulb flashes. There is beauty in the process of achieving, failing, and resetting. **This is your career to own, to envision, to love.** 📌

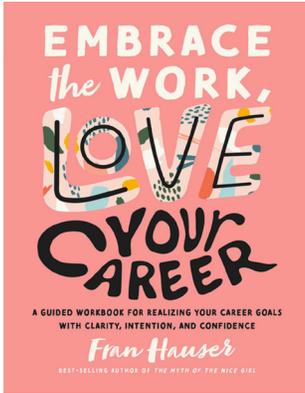
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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fran Hauser is an author, keynote speaker and startup investor. She is passionate about helping women build fulfilling careers and successful businesses. Fran has invested in over 25 female-founded companies across consumer packaged goods, media & publishing, and wellness. Her writing, speaking, and investing is informed by 15 years spent in media, where she rose through the ranks at Time Inc. to President of Digital. She is the best-selling author of *The Myth of the Nice Girl: Achieving a Career You Love Without Becoming a Person You Hate* which has been translated into six languages and was named "Best Business Book of the Year, 2018" by Audible. She resides just outside of NYC with her husband and two sons.

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