

INTRODUCTION

MY STORY

In 2007, I was finishing a wonderful year in the music business. While still in my forties (*sort of*), I had successfully filled 1,000-seat auditoriums for solo concerts over a dozen times in twelve months and my 2008 calendar was filling up. Those were exciting days. After spending extensive time and energy—not to mention tons of emotion—I had not only developed a rewarding music career, but I had also successfully launched three sons into young adulthood. In those crucial years, from 2007-2008, my empty nest meant I had crucial time to invest in my career—finally! Life was good.

Then everything changed when the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression hit. Suddenly all that extra cash audiences had been spending on concert tickets evaporated. Performance halls and local auditoriums found it difficult to sell seats. Various venues all cancelled their bookings with me, so by April of 2008, my calendar became suddenly empty. I felt stuck, and my career horizon showed no quick turn-around.

Welcome to my life at half time. With my career path interrupted. I found myself at the base of what I like to call my Hero Mountain®. As I gazed at the climb before me, I knew I needed preparation for some rocky paths ahead. In that process, I saw many other women facing similar challenges.

HALFTIME

So what is halftime? It's that period in the middle of a game where players reassess their first half, then make adjustments for their future

success. It is a brief recovery time to refocus on the most critical action points. An effective halftime in a game occurs when it is dedicated exclusively to identifying and counteracting the most disruptive forces to a team or player's success.

Just as there is halftime in sports, most career professionals need time to reflect on critical talking points and disruptive forces in their lives at halftime, too. Those half-time decisions will largely determine one's remaining life path. Will we merely fade into the second half of our lives, operating a tired, outdated strategy, living on autopilot? Or will we successfully reinvent ourselves to ascend to the personal peaks of our own Hero Mountains®? Only those who reach the top can experience and claim the vistas at the peak.

Identifying and counteracting the most disruptive forces is important in Halftime.

THE GAME PLAN

This book is about both reassessing then re-developing a strategy to succeed in life's second half. Like me, many women manage careers, raise kids, satisfy husbands, serve as volunteers, feel their bodies change (*then slip away!*) and fight culture's incessant attempts to make them invisible.

For it happens that one day, women like me suddenly realize the world has changed. Coworkers start calling us *ma'am* and viewing us as irrelevant. Awareness of that change brings with it tugs of urgency. It is a time for reassessment and evaluation, but where do we start?

Women at Halftime are not dead! They still have a tank full of energy and tons of skills, experience, and perspective. However, negative self-talk screams out questions that can tear them down:

- Can I really start over?
- Does anyone still want me?
- How much more can I learn?

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- How much longer can I keep myself together before I lose my mind?
- Can I ever be as good as (*insert a colleague's name here*)?

Women at this stage often describe their feelings in the following ways: *Stuck, Lost, Slogging uphill, Completely unsure, Ready, but not ready, Exhausted, or Trapped in neutral*. Further, each is fearfully asking, “Am I enough?”

SUMMARIZING THE SOLUTION: CABLES OF SUCCESS

Cables One and Two: Mindset and Purpose

Effectively confronting **negative talk** and **bad mental code** are necessary for a half time effort. An adverse mindset will negate everything else a woman builds as she climbs her personal Hero Mountain®. Remember the 1930s children’s story *The Little Engine that Could?* Its theme is the value of optimism and hard work. The story’s signature phrase, “I think I can” first appeared in a 1902 article, then in multiple sermons, stories, and tales until it became part of that memorable book.

Like that little engine, when we climb our Hero Mountains™, we can change that statement “I think I can” to “I know I can!” As in any mountain climbing effort, the climber needs skills and tools to ensure a successful journey. Similarly, as we define our purposes and gather our gear, we are gathering our climbing cables of success. To build our confidence and maintain our enthusiasm, like that little train engine, we need a positive, confident mindset.

These efforts will establish a focused **purpose** that brings a woman new energy. Whether that purpose is to build an existing business, start a new business, or give more time to a worthy cause, that purpose will provide women reasons to wake up enthusiastically each morning. A well-defined purpose or mission, along with a solid

plan will be the turbo engine that propels and empowers all the other cables for a successful climb.

Cables Three and Four: Competency and Skills

A careful, honest, impartial evaluation of a woman's **competencies** is another cable of success. Trying to digest the many self-help books on **finding strengths** and **identifying a passion** can be overwhelming, but this process doesn't have to be a long, drawn-out activity. We begin by finding the pattern and Core Common Denominator™ of all we have accomplished so far. Many times it's surprising! Halftime can be an affirming time of life when we understand who we are, matched with what we truly want to pursue.

After we successfully define our core strengths or competencies, acquiring additional **skills** based on those competencies will increase success in our second half. With the increase of technology and artificial intelligence, many economists claim the need for skilled workers will only grow because more automated tasks can be programed, giving individuals a chance to use their higher-value skills. This is great news for us because developing new skills based on our competencies will increase opportunities to work in a field we love.¹

Cables Five and Six: Habits and Relationships

With our purpose and competencies ascertained, we must develop healthy and consistent **habits** in order to effectively execute a plan. Reinforcing good habits will help us learn new skills effectively and competently while repeating bad habits will only lead to deeper ruts. To repeatedly practice unhelpful strategies that don't work only brings frustration and defeat. However, a well-defined, healthy habit or routine will act as a management tool to bring success.

In order to keep from falling backwards on our ascent to Hero Mountain, we also need a healthy application of the **relationship** cable. Productive, healthy **relationships** feed our energy with

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understanding and support for the climb. Even though it's emotionally difficult to implement, we must let go of toxic relationships that tear down our confidence and hold us back from trying new ventures.

This book is an introduction to the essential cables needed to ascend one's Hero Mountain peak. In addition, Hero Mountain® online and live summits provide further training to maximize the climb for both men and women. This book is designed to help readers escalate their journeys, and then serve as a tool to give ongoing reminders to reflect and evaluate what practices to keep or discard and what approaches to adopt in the future.

Are you ready to get started? Let's go!