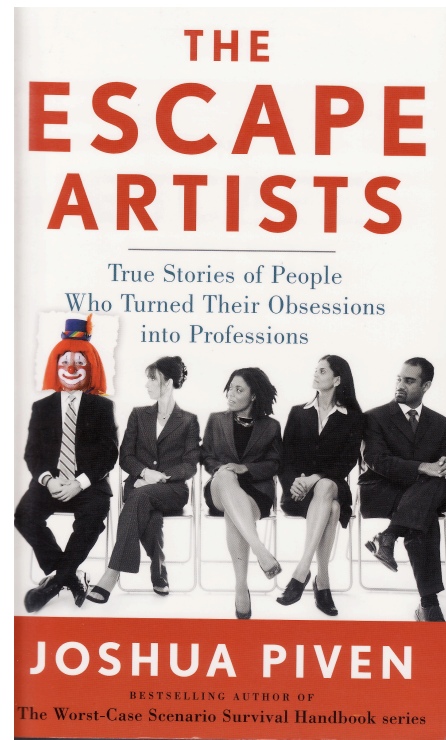

BOOK REVIEW

"The Escape Artists: True Stories of People Who Turned Their Obsessions into Professions" **by Joshua Piven**

McGraw-Hill: New York 2007
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As a career's coach, I often have people ask me about how to follow their passions. "How can I continue to surf and also make a living?" asked a 17-year-old. "How can I write movie scripts and survive?" asked a 28-year-old. We all have our passions and strengths and that doesn't always mean that we want to sit behind a desk all day or in an office cubicle watching a computer screen.

This book is about those people who tell their stories about how they were able to pursue their vocations "outside the square." Life is a compromise and none of these people placed money as the ultimate reward. Instead, they had other needs that were more important to fulfil. Furthermore, this book demonstrates how persistence pays off. It also shows quite candidly that the road to that niche career is never straight, but instead is a zigzag to the

ultimate destination. It also shows that when people keep the main thing the main thing, and continue to follow their dreams, that one chance event leads to another and another. As the saying goes, "opportunity meets preparation."

There is the gadget man Richard who enjoys electronics and tinkering as a hobby and he was also obsessed with science fiction films such as Star Trek and then Star Wars. His passion led him to enter as a contestant in a Star Trek costume and masquerade contest. Along came a lucky break and as I often hear people say, "you've got to be in it to win it." This fellow ended up working on the set of the Star War movies. His hobby became his career.

Then there was Mark who trained as an accountant and then studied an MBA, but he took up martial arts in order to get some balance back in his life. He gained in self-confidence as he gained proficiency in martial arts. This was a hint about his talents and strengths. A chance meeting with a former Navy SEAL set him thinking. He eventually became a SEAL and he knew he had found his niche. He even started a website devoted to the Navy Seals. His career is not *"making him rich, but one that's making him happy."*

Take Steve who enjoyed being active and dynamic and certainly not being stuck behind a desk. After trying the office job and trying to deal with the office politics as well as bosses and management who constantly tried to cover their backs, he decided it was not for him. He studies to gain a degree, but still had difficulty finding a job partly because he wasn't sure what he wanted to do. A conversation at a party however, made him think about the possibility of life in the military and so he eventually enlisted. This was before America was actively engaged in operations overseas and before 9/11 and not surprisingly, he found the military very routine and boring too. Back to business and sales, but overwork and frustration with that job eventually came to a head. Sitting down with his wife he talked about his dream job, placing law enforcement at the top of the list. He now has a job for the Drug Enforcement Administration where most days are spent tracking down, shadowing, arresting cocaine and heroin traffickers connected to the Colombian drug cartels. Is Steve now happy? You better he is. *"Finding a career you love is often a process that melds the best aspects of your favourite pursuits while cutting any out the stuff you hate."*

This book is a must for those individuals who are concerned enough to want to follow their passions and strengths, and not settle for second best. Life is too short as they say. Follow your passion, not your pension. This book shows how 10 people were able to eventually be true to themselves by finding

their passion and be able to survive financially and gain enough dollars to have a comfortable life.

If you're interested in materialism and wealth, don't read this book. Instead, this is a book for those few individuals who have identified their strengths and know their passions and who are courageous enough to follow their dreams rather than be compromised. Alternatively, it's a book of those individuals who will allow themselves opportunity to explore what life has to offer in relation to their strengths and talents.

As well as appealing to individuals who are on the journey searching for that certain career, this book could also appeal to career counsellors especially those in the secondary and tertiary sector as well as those who are dealing with that group who might be termed "the troubled Twenties" who are still exploring who they are and where they are going.

[Dr Darryl Cross is a clinical and organisational psychologist as well as a credentialed executive and personal coach. He is also an author, international speaker and university lecturer. Dr Darryl assists people to find their strengths and reach their goals. Further information on Dr Darryl can be seen at www.DrDarryl.com]