THE 3 SECRETS OF

HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL

GRADUATES

by Reid Hoffman

My name is Reid Hoffman and I'm an entrepreneur and investor.

I cofounded **LinkedIn** in 2003 with the mission of connecting the world's professionals to make them more **PRODUCTIVE** and **SUCCESSFUL**.



I've heard the **CAREER CONCERNS** of students around the world...



... from the millions of **STUDENTS** on LinkedIn...



...to the super young ENTREPRENEURS I've invested in...

BRIAN CHESKY



...to the student leaders who read my book **THE START-UP OF YOU**.





And I've noticed a **COMMON** career concern...



THEY DON'T FEEL READY.



College is supposed to prepare you for **surviving** and **thriving** in the world of work.



But the world of work has **CHANGED**.

Stable career paths are **DISAPPEARING**.

COMPETITION can come from anywhere.

And the world continues to CHANGE at a relentless pace.



If you are graduating, you may feel ANXIOUS.

I want you to know THAT'S OKAY.

That **UNCERTAINTY** you feel right now about your future—it won't ever go away.

In an ever-changing world, managing your career is a LIFELONG PROCESS.



When I graduated from undergrad...



I thought I knew what I wanted to do.



was **wrong**.

I could **NOT** have predicted my career path.

It even took me 15 YEARS to realize what I was doing had a name... 265 1966 1967 1968 19 1973 1974 1975 1976 197 1981 1982 1983 1984 198. 1990 1991 1992 1993 7 1998 1999 2000 2001 2006 2007 2008 2009

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Along the way, I've developed an eye for the patterns of **success** and **FAILURE**.

And there are at least **THREE THINGS** that successful professionals eventually figure out about their careers.



You **won't** find them in any of your textbooks.

And your school **DOESN'T** teach them.



And I'm sure you'd rather **NOT** wait 15 years to discover them.

2014 2015 2016 2017

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I want to share them with you today.

1. Competition

2. Networks



"How do I bring my **DIFFERENT INTERESTS** together into a career?"



"What should I do if I DON'T KNOW what I like?"



"How do I choose between so many **DIFFERENT PASSIONS**?"



All of these are variations of the **CLASSIC CAREER QUESTION**...

"What should I **DO** with my life?"
But these are the **WRONG** questions to ask.

Among other things, these questions focus the attention on





instead of the most important factor...

EVERYONE ELSE

Many people **WANT** your dream job.





For anything desirable, there's **COMPETITION**.

COMPETITIVE **ADVANTAGE**

you need to develop a

To beat the competition,





But what is a COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE made of?







ASSETS





MARKET REALITIES



Your **ASSETS** are what you have going for you now.



Your **ASPIRATIONS** are where you might like to go in the future.

And the **MARKET REALITIES** are what people will actually pay you for. The best career has you pursuing worthy **ASPIRATIONS**, using your **ASSETS**, while navigating the **MARKET REALITIES**.



Another **CLASSIC QUESTION** you may struggle with...

"How do I make a **POSITIVE DIFFERENCE** in the world?"

You may think that you, as a **RECENT GRADUATE** with **LIMITED WORK EXPERIENCE**, don't have much to offer. In fact, your EXISTING ASSETS have value, too.

You'll be surprised how valuable your existing skills and connections are to those who DON'T HAVE THEM.

Just ask others: "HOW CAN I HELP?"

You'll learn to understand what **OTHER PEOPLE'S NEEDS** are.

Fulfill needs. Solve problems. And you **CHANGE THE WORLD**.

1. Competition

2. Networks

3. Risk

In college, you had dorms, student organizations, classes...

Building relationships was EASY.



But in the real world, you have to learn to **proactively** build your network.



Relationships matter because every job boils down to interacting with **PEOPLE**.



PEOPLE control resources, opportunities, and information.



Opportunities do **DO NOT FLOAT** like clouds in the sky.



They're attached to **PEOPLE**.

If you're looking for an **OPPORTUNITY**, you're really looking for a **PERSON**.

The people you spend time with shape who you are and who you become.



The fastest way to change yourself is to hang out with people who are **ALREADY THE WAY YOU WANT TO BE**.

The best way to meet new people is via THE PEOPLE YOU ALREADY KNOW.



You may not think you know THE RIGHT PEOPLE.



Your existing network is

BIGGER

than you think.

If you're connected to a couple hundred people on LinkedIn, you're actually at the center of a network **MORE THAN 2 MILLION PEOPLE STRONG**.





In other words, it's likely that

SOMEONE YOU ALREADY KNOW

knows someone who could help you.


This is the **POONSER** of the extended network.

1. Competition

2. Networks

3. Risk



Our education system penalizes students for MAKING MISTAKES.

But in the real world, you don't know what the best plan is until you



And making mistakes is part of that LEARNING PROCESS.

Learn by **DOING**.



Not sure if you can break into the pharmaceutical industry?

Spend six months interning at Pfizer making connections and **SEE WHAT HAPPENS**.

Curious whether MARKETING or PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT is a better fit than what you currently do?



If you work in a company where those functions exist, offer to HELP OUT for free.



That's exactly **WHAT I DID** at Apple, my first job after grad school.

Whatever the situation, ACTIONS, not plans, generate useful lessons. Actions help you discover where you want to go and how to get there.

In college, the MOST SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS make the FEWEST MISTAKES.

But the **most successful professionals** learn to take **INTELLIGENT RISKS**.

AA

You may assume that you get career stability by MINIMIZING RISK.



Ironically, in a changing world, **PLAYING IT SAFE** is one of the riskiest things you can do.



Rather than avoid risk, **TAKE INTELLIGENT RISKS**. It will give you a competitive edge.

For example, do not dismiss jobs that **PAY LESS IN CASH** but offer **TREMENDOUS LEARNING**.

Prioritize plans that offer the best chance at **LEARNING** about yourself and the world.

Do not dismiss a career path just because you keep hearing **HOW RISKY IT IS**.





It probably isn't as risky as most believe, which means there's LESS COMPETITION for landing the opportunity.

In these opportunities, the **worst-case scenario** tends to be survivable.



When the worst case means getting fired, losing a little bit of time or money, or experiencing some discomfort, IT IS A RISK YOU SHOULD **BE WILLING TO TAKE.**

If the worst-case scenario is the serious tarnishing of your reputation, loss of all your economic assets, or something otherwise career-ending, **DON'T ACCEPT THAT RISK**.



There will always be UNCERTAINTY

about career opportunities and risks.

The best opportunities are frequently the ones with the **MOST QUESTION MARKS**.







When it's not clear how something will play out, many people **AVOID IT ALTOGETHER**.

Take intelligent risks and you will find **THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT OTHERS MISS**.



So, **CONGRATULATIONS** on the hard work you've put into your education thus far, but your learning has just begun.



Graduation is **NOT** the end of learning.

We are all works-IN-progress.

Each day presents an opportunity to **LEARN MORE, DO MORE, BE MORE** in our lives and careers.

In the world of work, EVERY DAY IS EXAM DAY.

you're **CONTRACTING**.

If you're not **GROWING**,

If you're not moving **FORWARD**, you're moving **BACKWARD**.

Develop your COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.

Build your NETWORK.

And take INTELLIGENT RISKS.

lf not now, when?





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the start-up of



Reid Hoffman

cofounder and chairman of Linkedin

Ben Casnocha