

**Q&A with Robert Dickie, author of
The Leap:
*Launching Your Full-Time Career in Our Part-Time Economy***

Q: Could you explain what it means to take “The Leap?”

A: In all stages of our lives, we stand at some proverbial edge. We will be faced with the decision to take the leap or let our fear hold us back. We will have a desire to do something incredible, to take a daring risk, to step outside our comfort zone, or to retreat to the perceived safety of our normal routine. Think back to the days of your youth and the first time you stood at the end of a diving board with your toes hanging over the edge as you trembled and you looked down at the big drop beneath you with kids yelling “jump” and the fear welling up inside of you. Would it hurt? Would you look silly if you did a belly flop? Would your swimsuit stay on? Remember the fear we had on that first jump? We wanted to jump but we were so afraid to take that first step. You know that once you take the leap, there is no going back...you are fully committed.

In the business context of my book, I’m talking about taking a leap away from what you might currently know or be comfortable with, and step into the unknown, with the goal of creating a better life. This book offers solutions for those trying to find work, advance in their career, or take the leap to an empowered life being in control of your destiny by starting a side career as a freelancer or entrepreneur. In 2009 I started blogging about the need for people to wake up and take “The Leap” by developing their inner entrepreneur. I felt people needed to start something on the side and to build multiple income streams in their life so they were not dependent on an increasingly unreliable corporate job. This passion project of mine is starting to go mainstream as media and government organizations are talking about the need for entrepreneurial training to help create the jobs of the future.

Q: What would motivate someone to do this?

A: The world has fundamentally changed, especially since 2007, and relying on corporate America or a single source of income is very risky. In the “old days,” a college graduate would usually be able to secure a job fairly easily right out of school and possibly have the opportunity to stay in that company and keep advancing until retirement. This old way of being able to almost stumble into a lifelong career is no more. If you want to succeed in this new economy, it’s going to require a leap of faith. And while things might be slowly improving on the surface, structural issues have not been fixed. The US economy although not fully recovered is in the fourth longest bull market in history without a 10% correction. We are in for a correction. The experts know it and when it comes it will impact everyone. Now is the time to start preparing. If you are prepared, you will notice the storm but you will weather it much better than those who made no plans, took on too much debt, and only had a single source of income. Be proactive, take control, and regardless of all the issues going on around you start creating the future you dream about.

Q: What do you believe is the best way to be prepared for this forthcoming “correction.”

A: I believe we need to understand the new realities of the developing economy and the educational requirements needed to be successful. Further, we need to be externally focused helping those in transition. Finally, we need to prepare to take a leap in our career. From young to old, one thing is certain, everyone is going to be in a state of transition in the coming years and those who have prepared for it will be best suited to navigate it well.

Q: What holds us back from taking the leap?

A: Our fears can hold us back from leaving bad relationships, taking a risk to start a new business, getting married, standing for a cause, becoming fully involved in a mission project instead of standing on the sidelines. Fear is the biggest hurdle to success and joy. Some people

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are in terrible jobs and want to take the leap into a new career but are afraid of the work required to get retrained, obtain a college education late in life, or are scared they might fail...all excuses that hold them back from living the life they truly desire. Sometimes it is not just their fear but the comments and opinions of others that they allow to crush their dreams and thus they don't take the leap. My dad taught me that the opinions of those on the sidelines don't matter. "If they don't have the guts to get in the ring...don't listen to them." The world is full of professional critics who don't have the courage to take the leap. Move on, set the example, and maybe your courage will inspire them to follow you at some point.

Q: Are there different kinds of leaps?

A: Absolutely. Maybe you have a big long-term goal like changing jobs or starting a new career. Is your leap starting your own company? Do you want to take a smaller leap by fixing your finances and fully funding your freedom fund? Maybe you want to take the leap with your health. It doesn't matter when you start, early or late in life, all that matters is that you take the leap and start today! No matter what you are going through, no matter how difficult it may appear to be, you can change and make progress towards your goal. No one can promise you success, but I can promise you that the process of starting and trying is worth it! No matter how difficult your leap may seem, no matter how alone you might feel, no matter how impossible or improbable your goal may seem now, know that the first step in the direction of that goal is one step closer to it becoming a reality. Although your journey, like mine, will be full of twists and turns and with many obstacles to overcome, I trust your faith will grow each day by the action you take and that you will enjoy the journey and learn along the way. I pray that through your actions you will help others and make your community, and the world, a better place.

Q: You also write about your own personal leap – you say you went from “food stamps to CEO in seven years.” How did that happen?

A: I had to make a leap—resigning from my safe job to launch out on my own and follow my passions. My journey is one of faith, hard work, support from mentors, friends, and family, and the power to re-imagine myself, and dream of a better future. The things I learned on this journey early in my life helped mold me into the person I am today. I never set out to be a CEO or run companies, all I wanted was a better life. I wanted to be self-reliant and be able to provide for my family. The things I learned on my journey have enabled me to make many leaps in my life. I have leapt from the military to the private sector, to start-up ventures to non-profit work. I have leapt into new educational pursuits with vastly different backgrounds. These skills transcend industry and once developed can be used in every endeavor of life. In the challenging economic times that people face today, I feel encouragement is needed more than ever.

Q: So, how does a person take the leap?

A: I was fortunate to have mentors around me who helped me analyze the opportunities and landscape and provided wise counsel and encouragement when I needed it most. I don't advocate taking the leap without a plan. Those who stand on the sidelines of life waiting for something good to happen will grow old waiting and watching everyone around them taking deliberate and intentional action and winning in the game of life. It will take focus, discipline, and hard work to achieve our goals as we take the leap in our careers, and these are muscles that we can exercise each day. We will not achieve our goals overnight, but we can make progress each day. Just like an athlete needs a coach to help them develop a plan and then keep them focused with encouragement along the way as they progress, people taking the leap need to have a mentor or "life coach" who can help them along the way. The key is to have someone who knows your plans and will help hold you accountable along the way with encouragement and advice.

Q: What the most difficult part of this process?

A: Often the most difficult thing to do is to start. We will all face adversity, and life will continue to get in the way if we wait for the perfect time to take steps to change our lives. As I have

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highlighted, there is no “perfect time,” and the most important thing we can do is to take action. That critical first step moving us toward our goal, even in the face of adversity, is what will give birth to our greatest achievements and success. Taking a leap in life will immediately set you apart from the crowd, as many will not have the courage or strength to lay it all on the line. Those who do are exposed. It can be challenging and scary at times, but it also yields the greatest rewards. When you take the leap—whether by starting your own business or by moving into a greater leadership role within your organization—you will be faced with many new challenges as a leader, and your career and business will often be on the line. Your decisions, your leadership, problem-solving abilities, and how you navigate challenging situations will determine your success or failure.

Q: To overcome this fear, your advice is to learn the discipline and take the practical steps to create the life they desire.

A: Yes. Taking the leap requires practice. Once you do it and survive, it becomes easier to make that jump again in the future. Are you afraid to jump off the high dive? Not any more. Are you afraid to climb Kilimanjaro...not once you have made it to the summit. At the summit you quickly start thinking about the other mountain peaks you want to climb. Once you take intentional action towards your goal you build courage for other things in life. Peter Drucker famously said, *“Most of what you hear about entrepreneurship is all wrong. It’s not magic, it’s not mysterious, and it has nothing to do with genes. It’s a discipline and like any discipline it can be learned.”*

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***The Leap:
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By Robert Dickie

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Contact Pamela McClure, McClure Muntsinger Public Relations,
615-595-8321 or pamela@mmpublicrelations.com

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