

# Business May Be Your Life – But – Life Is *Your* Business

## Part III: Finding Your Passion And Purpose<sup>A,B</sup>



James A. Cusumano, PhD

*"Your Personal legend [purpose] is what you have always wanted to accomplish. Everyone, when they are young, knows what their Personal Legend is. As time passes, a mysterious force begins to convince them that it will be impossible for them to realize their Personal Legend."*

**Paulo Coelho – "The Alchemist"**

**KEY CONCEPTS:**

- You can find and pursue your true passion and purpose in life.
- The first step is an honest answer to each of four provocative questions.
- The second step is to develop an action plan that follows from your answers, and courageously pursue it.

*You are eminently capable of finding that special part of your body, mind and spirit that distinguishes you from all others in your professional and personal circles – that unique "something" which gives you sheer pleasure and has the potential to generate great value for both you and the world. That "something" is nothing less than your true*



Figure 1: The author as lead singer for the Royal Teens during younger and physically more "flexible" days!

passion and purpose in life. Most of us unwittingly "know" what it is when we are quite young, but for many people the machinations and momentum of modern society are a distraction and they can push us on to another track – one that is often unsatisfying and unproductive. Is it any wonder that studies show only about 20 percent of employees are happy with their jobs<sup>1</sup>? And as for "successful" business people, less than 20 percent have truly successful marriages and close relationships<sup>2</sup>. It is my conviction and personal experience that *if you earnestly follow your purpose and passion and build your life around them, you are much more capable of creating both a successful and a balanced life, and enriched relationships that flow from success based on this vital sense of balance.* If you have lost sight of your passion and purpose, you can recapture it!

I have a friend who is a psychologist, a teacher, a best-selling author, and from time to time has been my personal advisor. His name is Dr. Gay Hendricks and he has written numerous books, some of which have appeared on the New York Times Best-Seller list. Long ago, he gave me a single piece of paper on which were written four key questions. Contemplating those provocative questions helped me focus on and understand what capabilities are unique to me. *Each of us has a special set of attributes; we know what they are when we are young; but as adults, we can lose touch with them, and must dig deep to rediscover them.*

Years ago, I had asked similar questions of myself. At the time, I was unaware of the positive impact this would have on my life. Gay's structure and wisdom helped me to see the power of his method and how it could help others. These four key questions are easy to ask, but challenging to answer. However, in doing so, you can achieve significant insight into your capabilities and match them with your desire for a positive lifelong journey. Gay discusses his approach in his latest book, "Making The Big Leap<sup>3</sup>."

To achieve best results requires a concerted, consistent and focused effort, but the outcome is more than worthwhile. After all, it is *your life!* When contemplating these questions, you might sit comfortably in a quiet place, perhaps in the wilds of nature, at the seaside, or on a mountain – wherever you feel safe, quiet, meditative and inspired. If you are a daily practitioner of meditation, you will find the process to be significantly easier. *In asking these questions, you must be totally honest, and not provide answers that your parents, loved ones, a teacher or your boss might like to hear.*

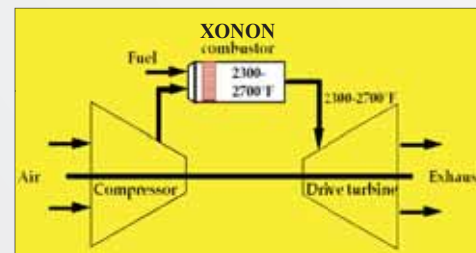
I once worked with a colleague, who is a brilliant and successful scientist. For years, conditioned and influenced by people around him, he *thought* that he should be a manager. "I want to move into management and administration. I've done the science stuff. It's time for

me to move *up* in the world," he would proclaim. When finally placed in that position, he became utterly distraught, and happily decided to return to the lab.

Answers to these four questions must come from deep within your soul. The answers should be the absolute truth and not – as was the case for my scientist friend – what you think they should be. Also, there is no room for modesty in this undertaking. Don't worry about being egocentric; you are only speaking to yourself. And please, don't concern yourself with making lots of money. It will just confuse the process. Besides, there are literally hundreds of examples which show that financial success often follows from pursuing your passion and purpose in life. To begin the process, I urge you to think back to your youth as well as your current stage in life, and focus on those things that interest you above all others. Think carefully and deeply. Don't rush the process.

Your answers to the four questions I will pose below may not have anything to do with what you studied in school or

Figure 2: Catalytica Energy Systems' XONON Technology – The world's first pollution-free, catalytic combustor for electric power generation.



what you do in your current job. They could reflect your special ability in athletics, music, photography, art, mechanics, or some other area. And remember, just because certain external influences drove you to become for example, a lawyer or a mechanic, does not mean that you must continue working as a lawyer or a mechanic for the rest of your life. Don't get stuck!

As I am not a therapist with access to many case histories, I can only provide a single qualified example, and that is my own professional life. So I hope you will bear with me, if I share with you my actual responses to the four questions. To put my answers in perspective, you must first know a few things about my history.

**EDITOR'S NOTE** – <sup>A)</sup> This is Part III in a new series of articles based on the author's experience as an entrepreneur, having founded several successful businesses, including Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, Inc., a billion-dollar public company. His experience base currently spans "5 lives" – A multimillion record sales recording artist; R&D Director for Exxon; CEO & founder of 2 public companies; CEO, founder and Executive Producer for Chateau Wally films; and Chairman & Owner of Chateau Mcely, an international award-winning luxury hotel & SPA. This article is extracted from his latest book, currently in preparation and entitled, "My Little Book of Business – Tales of Passion, Life & Enterprise."

<sup>B)</sup> The author may be reached at [Jim@ChateauMcely.Com](mailto:Jim@ChateauMcely.Com).

**Figure 3: Movie poster for "What Matters Most," award winner at numerous film festivals, released in over 45 countries.**



To date, I have "lived" five professional lives. Early on, I was a recording artist and sang with a group called the *Royal Teens* that had several "gold" recordings, one of which sold over 2 million copies (see **Figure 1**). Subsequently, I was educated in chemistry and physics and then in business. After several years as Director of R&D for Exxon, I spent much of my professional career in Silicon Valley, founding and building companies based in environmentally-sustainable technologies (see **Figure 2**). Eventually, I returned to entertainment and founded a film company, which produced and distributed worldwide a feature film called "What Matters Most," ([www.ChateauWallyFilms.Biz](http://www.ChateauWallyFilms.Biz)) (see **Figure 3**). More recently, I have worked with my wife and business partner, Inez, who had purchased a dilapidated Czech castle the year before we met. Together, we renovated and restored it. Chateau Mcely, conveniently located just outside of Prague in the midst of the St. George Forest, opened in 2006, and is now an international award-winning, luxury hotel, restaurant, spa and forest retreat ([www.ChateauMcely.Com](http://www.ChateauMcely.Com)) (see **Figure 4**).

As the next step in our strategy, I am planning a foundation, based at Chateau Mcely that will bring to the castle "change-makers" and wise thinkers from around the world to address critical global issues and provide the means to teach a new kind of leadership – a leadership that is effective in dealing transparently with critical crises such as economic collapse, energy security, and climate change.

From this summary, you will likely observe that entrepreneurial connections occurred throughout my life at the interface of technology, entertainment and business. I will elaborate on this point as I disclose my answers to the four questions.

Here are the **FOUR QUESTIONS** and my respective answers:

**1. What do I most love to do, so much so that time passes incredibly quickly?** – I love to entertain, and to teach people important concepts of value that I have learned throughout my life. I am particularly drawn to the interface of technology, business and the needs of humanity. I am interested and experienced in the art of motivating people in business to achieve challenging goals.

As a young boy, **three events** foreshadowed my lifelong passion and purpose and set the stage for the rest of my professional life. (1.) At age 9, I received a chemistry

set for Christmas. After experimenting my way through the typical shenanigans of making stink bombs and fireworks, I became so inspired by the neat "products" I could make that I set up a lab in the cellar of my parents home, and there I "manufactured" cosmetics, cleaners, inks, adhesives – you name it – and sold them door to door in our neighborhood. What thrilled me most was not the money I made, but the fact that someone was willing to pay for my "products" – an indication that I brought value to the customer. This formed the basis for my career as a technical entrepreneur. (2.) I am the oldest of 10 children, raised in a family of very modest means. From a young age, I worked to support both me and my family. Growing up in the 1950s in New Jersey, across the river from Manhattan – entertainment capital of the world – I fell in love with rock 'n roll music. Rather than brave the cold Jersey winters as a paper boy to earn money, I took piano lessons so that I could form a band to do something I was passionate about – playing rock 'n roll music – and working indoors! This led to my career in entertainment. (3.) A birthday gift of a toy typewriter and later on a child's small printing press inspired me to write and "publish" short stories and a neighborhood newspaper, each issue having "paid" advertisements for local merchants. "Paid" usually meant a chocolate candy bar. Over the years, my writing of numerous papers, articles and books sprung forth from that little typewriter and child's printing press.

**2. What work do I do or have I done in the past that I do not consider work?** – I have always enjoyed speaking (teaching), writing and entertaining (singing).

I continue to pursue these joys by writing business and technical articles and books. I find enough time to do a few "Oldies" concerts each year and donate my compensation to charity. Since "charity begins at home," I continue to sing on stage at Chateau Mcely for special occasions, such as our New Year's Eve Gala event.

**3. What could I do that would create the greatest value for the world around me, as well as the greatest personal satisfaction for the amount of time spent?** – I could bring together and inspire with my sense of vision and mission, talented people – much more talented than I – who are capable of having a positive impact on critical issues facing humanity by the effective interface of business, entertainment and technology.

It was this passion that helped me play a leadership role in founding and building successful businesses in the U.S. and now in Europe. Catalytica Energy Systems developed the world's first clean catalytic combustion system for generating power and electricity (Figure 2). Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, which created cost-effective, environmentally-sustainable technologies for the manufacture of drugs, was Silicon Valley's fastest growing company for 2 consecutive years. It grew in less than 5 years from 4 people to 2,000 people with sales of \$500 million and a market value of \$1 billion (see Part II of this series).

**4. What is my unique ability, such that if this skill were truly actualized, it could provide significant benefits to the organization for which I work, to the world, and to me?** – I have a personal presence, and a knowledge of and experience in technology, entertainment and business that quickly connects with most people. My multidisciplinary background often brings great value.

By example, I offer a short story. When my partners and I were raising venture capital for the first time, we sought a valuation for our fledgling company that was 20% higher than the lead venture group was willing to pay. The day before we were to finalize our negotiations, I met the Managing Director of a second venture firm that was interested in putting money into our company.

**Figure 4: Chateau Mcely: International award-winning, castle hotel, spa and forest retreat**



Over dinner, one of my colleagues told this gentleman about my prior career in music. The gentleman suddenly exclaimed, "Now I know why you look so familiar; I saw you several times some years ago on Dick Clark's American Bandstand TV Show. That's just fantastic! Would you be willing to sing for our annual venture party?" The next day his company contributed 50% of our funding and both venture groups agreed to our 20% higher valuation.

Honest answers and an action plan that follows from these answers can make a huge difference in moving you towards goals that make life a much more satisfying, productive and rewarding journey. Why try to live someone else's dream, even if that dream belongs to your parents, a teacher, or a loved one? It can't be done. And besides, as impossible as it may seem at this very moment, it requires much less effort to follow your own passion and purpose than to become an unhappy "prisoner" trying to live someone else's dream.

**James A. Cusumano, PhD** ■

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Gary Hamel, *European Wall Street Journal*, December 16, 2009.
- <sup>2</sup> Hohn Cuber and Peggy B. Harrof, <http://www.escholarship.org/editions/view?docId=kt9z09q84w&chunk.id=ss2.02&toc.depth=100&toc.id=ss1.35&brand=ucpress>.
- <sup>3</sup> Gay Hendricks, "Making The Big Leap," Harper Collins, New York, N.Y. 2009.

**About the Author:** James A. Cusumano is Chairman and owner of Chateau Mcely ([www.ChateauMcely.Com](http://www.ChateauMcely.Com)), chosen in 2007 by the European Union as the only "Green" 5-star luxury hotel in Central and Eastern Europe and in 2008 by the World Travel Awards as the Leading Green Hotel in the World. He is a former Research Director for Exxon, and subsequently founded two public companies in Silicon Valley, one in clean power generation, the other in pharmaceuticals manufacture via environmentally-benign, low-cost, catalytic technologies. While he was Chairman and CEO, the latter – Catalytica Pharmaceuticals, Inc. – grew in less than 5 years, to a \$1 billion enterprise with 2,000 employees. He is co-author of "Freedom from Mid-East Oil," recently released by World Business Academy Press ([www.WorldBusiness.Org](http://www.WorldBusiness.Org)) and can be reached at [Jim@ChateauMcely.Com](mailto:Jim@ChateauMcely.Com).