Fan To Pro

Leveling Up Your Career Through Your Hobbies

(Second Edition)

SAMPLE

(Full book available at <ins>www.informotron.com</ins>)

By Steven Savage

Introductions by Bonnie Walling and Damien Lavazzo

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Leveling Up Your Career Through Your Hobbies
Second Edition

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Second Edition

www.fantoprobook.com
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people without whom this book would have been impossible.

Bonnie: Who encouraged me those many times I commented that I wanted to do something to help people turn their hobbies into careers. Who encouraged me to write and speak. Without us working together there would have been no www.fantopro.com, there wouldn't be its "evolution" into www.musehack.com and no book. Or books.

Serdar: For showing me the value of second editions and really telling me when I needed to improve. He also taught me how to pace myself.

Taylor: Who encouraged me to think of new ways I could help people. Without you, it is doubtful I'd be doing this.

Eileen, Hank, Neal, and everyone else who encouraged me to speak on the fan-to-pro concept: Without you my scope would have been far more limited, and I would have had less feedback, and met less interesting people.

Richelle, Cynthia, and my other pre-readers: Thanks for reading the book and providing your advice! You helped me take this book farther.

Richelle: My incredible cover artist who gave the second edition a new look.

David Allen: His books on productivity taught me the organization I needed to write my own books, and who showed me advice books can be fun.

Orville Pierson: His books on job searching and his advice spurred me to help others.

Everyone who ever told me to write a book: You were right. As this is the second edition, you were **really** right.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to everyone who knows the truth that we are happiest when we use what we love and care about in a career, and to all who help people realize that truth.

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The Fan To Pro Manifesto

Our true interests and abilities can be determined by looking at what we are passionate about: the things we fan over, geek out over, and obsess about – our hobbies and our fandoms.

Our careers are best directed by our true interests and abilities.

By examining our hobbies, interests, and pastimes we gain insight into ourselves – our passions, our abilities, our knowledge, and our connections.

By applying what we learn about ourselves from our hobbies and interests, we may achieve more fulfilling careers and lives.

To not do this is to limit ourselves.

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(Full book available at www.informotron.com)

Introduction By Bonnie Walling

The concept of Fan to Pro was born several years ago, when Steve Savage and myself kept seeing the work that fanartists, fan writers and fan video makers were posting online. "Look at all the talent," we said. "Why aren't these people professionals?"

We figured it was because these people considered what they were doing trivial, inconsequential. Common mindset, after all, was that fanwork was frivolous, a waste of time. People needed to know that their time wasn't wasted; that they were developing skills that could help them in all areas of life – not just the professional.

Thus was born Fan to Pro, which has gone through several forms since its inception – a blog, a podcast, and even a series of convention panels. Eventually, it took its ultimate form when Steve published his insights in the form of the first edition of this book.

Since then, there have been a lot of changes. We have seen a lot of fans turning professional – most visibly the Twilight ficcer who turned her work into the international blockbuster *Fifty Shades of Grey*. But she's not the only one – there have been fake trailer makers who have been asked to make the real thing, cosplayers who found themselves the subjects of a reality TV series, and innumerable fanartists accepted to art schools.

We've also seen an increasing amount of technology that makes creativity easier – from 3-D printers to enhanced software suites – and the rise of Maker Culture, which can be described as intense creativity and invention without fandom sources. In short, the route to turning your talents and dreams into reality is in constant evolution.

And then, there's the job market itself. Suddenly, instead of one or two centralized sites to hunt for jobs, there's super-specialized ones springing up everywhere, allowing job hunters to narrow down

what they're looking for like never before (but, in response, a lot of employers are hyper-targeting their ads as well, meaning that the smart job hunter now has to know how to sell their skills in a number of different ways).

As a result of all this, the Fan to Pro blog itself changed – it evolved into MuseHack (www.musehack.com), a site devoted to geek lifestyles as a whole, including creativity and community – though still very much including careers among its mission.

But the more things change, the more one thing stays the same – people need encouragement and good, old-fashioned advice. And that's where this book comes in.

Steve Savage understands the fan to pro world because he's been there himself. He's been involved in conventions, in fanfiction, and in helping other fans become better at what they do. He's also a tech professional, and understands the nuts and bolts of contemporary industry.

As you read these pages, you will find things that make you think, things that will make you take stock of your own dreams and ambitions and transform them into reality. Because you have what it takes to do so.

If you've been in fandom, you've learned all sorts of skills that are useful in the job market – often without even knowing it. You've been able to polish your art or video editing or web site curating, sure – but you've also learned to market your own work, to keep things organized and, sometimes, even diplomacy – because there are disputes between nations that have been less tricky than some fan wars.

It's time to take those skills to the next level, to create the kind of career – no, not just that, the kind of life – that you've always wanted. And this book can help point you in the right direction.

Who knows – you may be the next great fan success story, the one that inspires untold numbers of fellow fans to turn their dreams into a reality. The first step is right here.

Bonnie Walling
Co-founder of the Fan to Pro blog and writer for
www.musehack.com

SAMPLE

(Full book available at www.informotron.com)

Introduction By Damien Lavizzo

Inspiration is a tricky thing to get right. If you try too hard at it, you end up coming across as forced or phony. On the other hand, if you're too subtle, your message may get lost in all the noise that surrounds us today. Finding that balance can be a non-trivial amount of work, and even then, most people don't get it right. I'll come back to this in a moment, though. First, lets talk about what you're holding in your hands. What's this book all about?

The book you're holding is less a book and more like a mirror. You are forced to take a long, objective look at a subject you may think you've mastered – yourself. What you discover may surprise you.

Fan to Pro is informative without being preachy, supportive without being constricting, helpful without being trite. Consider it the first step on the road to rediscovering yourself. You'll find that you start to get in touch with not only who you are, but why you are who you are.

Steven isn't a guru, he isn't a soothsayer, and he's not a self-help peddler. He doesn't claim to be. He's not peddling a way to get rich quick, or even promising that you'll get rich at all. His is less a self-help book and more of a tool for your own self-analysis. Its a way for you to ask and answer questions about yourself that may never have occurred to you. It's a way for you to shine a light on talents and skills that may not have known you had, and put them into practice in profitable, practical ways. Like a talented wizard, he takes the abstract and makes it tangible.

What Steven offers isn't a step by step guide to riches; we know those are baloney anyway. What he offers is something far more valuable. He illustrates how to discover and apply your own value, how to take the things you're passionate about and apply them to the "real" world. The process is liberating and enlightening, and (to be honest) a little embarrassing. You'll find a lot of "why didn't I

think of that?" moments tucked away in the coming pages. Steven's wisdom is so simple that it almost seems like it should be obvious. Only, it isn't. He takes the uncommon approach of attempting to find a positive in everything. He'll grab ahold of your negative perceptions of yourself and your geeky interests and shake them right out of you. I don't want to spoil anything for you, but you're in for a ride.

The thing that's so compelling about Steven is he doesn't just fill his pages with meaningless positivity. His book isn't so much a self-help book as a roadmap for self-discovery. I have the good fortune to have gotten to know Steven personally after reading the first edition of this book, and it struck me that his work isn't just something he came up with on the spur of the moment; he's lived this philosophy and put it into practice. He's used his own fan skills to give back to the community in a number of ways. He's got the credibility. That, and I can vouch for his results.

Within a month of reading the first edition of Steven's book and doing all the exercises, I decided to start my own company – Zenion Games. A few months ago I took on my first employee, and by the time you read this we'll have launched our first product. None of this would have happened without Steven's ability to force his reader to focus on their passions and experience as positives and to shed the stigma that comes with being a true fan. My company would not exist without this book. It all goes back to what I mentioned earlier – inspiration. It can come from very unlikely places. It can come from Steven quietly telling you "you're better than you think." Inspiration can be someone pointing you in the right direction and giving you a push. This book is that push. If you give the exercises the time and care that Steven himself did writing them, the rewards will be nothing short of life changing.

I hope you enjoy this book as much as I did. Godspeed on your journey of self-discovery.

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SAMPLE

(Full book available at www.informotron.com)

Introduction To The Second Edition

By Steven Savage

This book is about how your interests – your hobbies, your fandoms, what you geek over – give you a wealth of tools to improve your job, career, and business. Actually it's the second edition of a book on that subject, but stick with me here.

We spend a lot of time and money on our hobbies. Hours upon hours go into watching anime, discussing sports events, listening to music, or running conventions. We'll pour money into obscure films, the right set of miniatures, or the perfect costume. If you're passionate about your interests, you know you'll put in time, sweat, and cash.

Many of us look at the joy, the experience, or the inspiration our hobbies bring us and ask "how can I do this as a career? How can I make what I love part of my job?" We want the meaning that comes with our hobbies to be part of what we do everyday to earn our keep, and to find a place in the world.

Certainly we see some people using their hobbies in their careers, and we want to do that for ourselves.

In turn, we are facing a changing economy as I write this (OK, rewrite this) in 2013 and 2014. The value of certain jobs is shifting, the importance of education and kinds of education changes, technical leaps promise much – and only sometimes deliver. Using our hobbies in our careers has value not just for happiness but for our survival, and for a chance to do something profound in a changing world.

The blunt fact is that the world changes, the economy can be tough, and we want to survive and prosper. Using our hobbies in our careers gives us both meaning and purpose, but also uses a

huge set of skills, knowledge, and opportunities to improve our lot in life. To apply our fandom to our careers gives us a huge advantage.

Of course at that point we have to actually *use* our hobbies in our careers, and that's where it gets a bit tough. This book is about going from "why not?" to "where do I start?" It's your manual to actually go do something with that desire to "careerize" your hobby (Yes, careerize is a word now).

To help you, this book provides two things.

First it gives you a new point of view to help see how fandoms fuel careers – if you can't see the opportunities you can't use them. Once you've learned how to see just what your hobbies give you to, then you can get to work . . . literally.

Secondly, it's an inventory of all the tools your hobbies give you to help your career. Believe me you've got one big career toolbox available to you, with a lot more tools than you realize. You just need someone to help you take inventory, use what you have, or in a few cases, even tell you there's a toolbox.

That's what this book is. A viewpoint and an inventory, with a lot of exercises to help you get that viewpoint, take your own inventory, and get going on building your career.

Think, just for a moment, about your fandom, hobbies, and passions.

Our hobbies and interests, and even our seemingly silly obsessions, are powerful. They tell us about ourselves. They give us opportunities. They help us grow. We pour ourselves into them, and come out different people – often better people. We just need to realize the potential that is there – so we can use it.

Your love of martial arts films may point you at a directorial career.

Your writing of fanfic or game reviews gives you writing skills you can use at work.

Your trip to a convention gives you a chance to scout an area to relocate for a new career.

All that time spent managing a sports collector's convention may mean that you've got a great future in event planning or management.

Once you have the viewpoint that lets you see the potential that fandoms provide, then your realize your interests and passions provide you with a huge set of tools to start, improve, and grow your career.

Does this mean that when you read this book you'll find the secret to doing your hobby for money and never feel like you're working ever again? No, you won't, because working on something is **working**. But you will get a lot of advice, insight, and exercises to see you've got a lot of ways to improve your career with your hobbies.

This book is written to be practical. In fact, let's talk about why it was written anyway . . .

Why I Wrote This Book - Again

You know the person in every group whom people go to with questions about jobs and the economy? That's been me for a good chunk of my life. I enjoy and work on my career. I keep up on business and economic news. I keep tabs on job search trends. I was told by many a friend I'd end up in HR or recruiting or job coaching at some point.

(Ironically I think I kind of have by writing this stuff. So you just bought a testimony to my friends being right.)

I was also involved in all sorts of geeky activities. I run the random-inspiration website   www.seventhsanctum.com. I go to conventions. I've helped run writer's groups. Through these I met a lot of fantastic people.

After awhile I began to realize just how many people I had met through my hobbies and in my life who had said "I'd like to make *this* my job, but . . ." where **this** was their hobby and passion. They were everywhere. They were talented.

They also often lacked guidance. Or advice. Or in too many cases **anyone** encouraging them. Then they'd usually come to me.

I'd had a pretty good career, and I was always interested in helping people out. I also kept up on industry and career news because I'd seen way to many economic downturns and seen too many people go in the wrong direction. I learned a lot and shared it – and often ended up learning from the people I shared with.

That's the kind of thing you want to take farther – that I wanted to take further.

Now I could say "hey, then I wrote a book," but it didn't happen that way. My friend Bonnie and I kicked around ideas for books on the subject, I did some seminars, and eventually we came up with the idea of a blog: www.fantopro.com (which itself would evolve to something else in time)

At the blog we covered careers and career-related issues for fans, geeks, and otaku. We did news updates, we wrote on various subjects. I realized after awhile I could write a book on the subject . . . and I did, the first "Fan To Pro" book.

The first book was short, tight, covered a lot, and also had a cover from my art deco interest that kind of didn't do the job. But it worked according to my readers, and I'm glad it helped. I was clearly on to something; there was a hunger for fan-and-career guidance.

I didn't stop writing. I wrote a book on running career events at conventions, *Convention Career Connection*. I did two books on specific hobbies and careers, Fanart and Cosplay, under my alliterative label of *Focused Fandom*. I wrote small career ebooks. I wanted to keep providing people guidance because the need was there, and I kept going.

(The entire body of work is at www.stevensavage.com and my press site, the Informotron, www.informotron.com, if you're interested)

I also blogged like crazy at various sites. Fan To Pro, the original website evolved into the "applied geekery" site of Muse Hack (www.musehack.com). I was doing a lot – and each experience, each column, each person I spoke with taught me a more.

After awhile I realized I should revisit my first book and add in all the stuff I'd learned. I should streamline the book to remove out-of-date or unneeded things. I should also probably get a new cover because the old one really wasn't that great. There were lots of shoulds.

You're reading the result of me listening to the shoulds. This is it. The second edition of "Fan To Pro", with a lot more information, a lot more insights and tools, more maturity, and frankly more pages.

Who Am I?

I suppose before we get to the rest of the book, it's time to earn my geek/fan credibility. Some of you are probably still wondering if my name is real (It is. Yes, I've heard all of the jokes). Let me

show that I'm for real.

I started being a geek early in life. I had two literate parents who taught me to read early, access to television (and PBS), and a supportive family. I read like crazy, and was often fascinated by science fiction, computers, and medicine. Many children wanted to be doctors – by the time I was in kindergarten, I could explain via metaphors how the cells in the human blood stream functioned.

I was about nine when *Star Wars* came out, but I'd already been reading science fiction novels and science-fiction history when it did. I got into old Science Fiction which really gave me a sense of history. I was probably the only person in elementary school reading "Doc" Smith's wonderfully overblown *Skylar*k adventures, with Dick Seaton, a man who had a name goofier than my own.

I also got into video games early – I played Space Invaders and owned an Atari 2600. That quickly turned into an interest in computing, from taking classes in BASIC at a local university to proudly writing games on my Apple IIe in Junior High.

I was that much of a geek. I was *hardcore*.

All along during my geeky endeavors and fannish activities, it rarely crossed my mind that I would *not* use these interests in my career. I always figured I'd have a job in science, or with computers, or maybe even be a writer on the side. I did get a bit discouraged now and then, but most people didn't argue with me; if nothing else I at least had a career plan of some kind.

It wasn't like they were going to dissuade me anyway, and in a few cases they probably weren't sure what I was talking about.

I did meander a bit career-wise as I got older. I took more of a science track(psychology), got tired of grad school, and went into the career world to see what I could do. Oddly enough, not

knowing which way to take my career didn't kill my idea of doing a job that leveraged my hobbies and geekiness. Instead, I kept looking for ways to do what I liked.

This eventually led me back to my computer career; with some retraining, I moved into Information Technology (IT). I knew that life would just not be as worth it if I could not do what I enjoyed, what I cared about, with the people that felt the same way.

IT is, of course is a hugely geeky/fannish place, where people obsess over cool technology, leverage spreadsheets to crunch fantasy football numbers, and more. I was in my element in IT. I started work in the field in 1995 and haven't looked back.

I worked my way through consulting, helping clients at various companies, became a Project Manager, then a Program Manager. My career took me into such diverse areas as finance, webcasting, video games, and media technologies. My obsessions, my hobbies, my interests - they all paid off in a more interesting life (and a good paycheck).

I have leveraged my geekiness, my hobbies, and my fandoms all of my life. Not doing it wasn't really an option as far as I was concerned.

This leads me to this book and my work, where I try to share what I learned, some of which I didn't know I was learning. This expanded book is an attempt to share even more with you, expanding on what I've found since I started writing, speaking, and blogging.

Because you can do it. You can use your hobbies in your careers.

Lots of people have done this. Much advice in this book comes from personal experience, research, and observation. Using your passions in your career is something that can be done, you

probably just need a change of perspective and a boost to go use what you're so damn good at.

There's a lot of fans, geeks, otaku, metalheads, and more who have made lives using what they love. I want to see more of that.

You're next.

OK, Let's Go

You know what this book is, why it exists, and why I did it. You tolerated my jawing, so let's get practical.

We'll do a quick intermission, and then let's talk about **you** – the geek, the fangirl/fanboy, the sports nut with the bobbleheads, the history buff.

We're going to talk why you, the fan, are so great. Because you are.

You may want to catch your breath. Because the ride is going to get interesting . . .

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(Full book available at www.informotron.com)

Chapter 1: The Power Of Fandom And Hobbies

Our hobbies and interests provide many advantages in careers, and once we learn to see them and appreciate them, we can apply them.

CHAPTER GOALS:
• To appreciate the special advantages dedicated hobbyists have: they are passionate, creative, involved, and persistent.
• To understand how these advantages differ from those who have more casual interests in the subjects we love.

It doesn't matter what kind of fan you are – this is about you. I don't care if you love anime, Role-Playing Games, epic fantasy, a particular sports team, or a genre of music. You're a fan – short, as we know, for fanatic. You're *deeply* involved in your hobbies, and more power to you.

A fan is defined by two things:

1) There are one or more hobbies/interests that they are passionate about and make a notable part of their lives (maybe not professionally, but hey, that's what this book is for).
2) This passion is something they spend time indulging in and doing things related to – playing games, writing fanfiction, making websites, etc.

Just "liking" something is one thing. Crafting costumes, writing fiction, building websites, and participating in communities related to your interest is what makes you a **serious** fan. This involvement makes you part of the "fandom," of the world of the fans and their efforts.

Being a fan, I want to let you know how awesome you are. Really.

Look, this is the pep talk part of the book, so sit down, keep reading, and let me tell you how great you are. Every book on life and careers needs a section like this, so let's get on with it and give you an ego boost. We'll get to the hard stuff that will depress you later.

If you're going to apply what you love in a career, you're going to need to appreciate yourself. Don't worry about keeping your ego in check since, you, life, and other people will probably do that just fine.

Why Fanboys, Fangirls, Geeks, Otaku, And Such Are Great

I'm a classification-oriented person, so I've broken down just why you are so awesome into a group of handy categories. As you may have noticed, I'm a fan of organization.

Once you realize you have these advantages, you can start applying it to other parts of your life. When you realize you've got an edge, you can use it – say in a career. Which is the point of the book of course.

Here's what fans have going for them:

Passion

Fans are passionate and involved, even to the point of obsession. They will read books over and over, rewatch games whose players are long-retired, or find obscure music from a band's early days. They care deeply about their chosen subject matter. It's part of their identity – and part of expressing who they are.

It's easy to question the usefulness of fanning. What do those hours spent watching TV do? What do those DVD collections mean? Why, for the love of all that's holy, did they spend time writing a multipart epic fanfic where the Beatles are vampire hunters in an alternate magical universe?

(I'm pretty sure that exists, by the way. If it does not, start writing.)

I don't see uselessness, I see truth, because what people will spend time doing tells us a lot about who they are. I see power, because this passion produces so many things, so many events and stories and pieces of art. I see a force that can be tapped to do other great things.

Fandom teaches you that you can love something. Fandom teaches you that things can get you worked up and directed – and what those things are. In those moments you feel down or distracted or lifeless, fandom can be that spark reminding you that you can and do care about something.

Fandom tells you that you can truly love something – and reminds you what you love. When you know what you love, then you have direction in your life – made much easier to follow when backed by that passion. That passion fuels achievement.

Remember this. We'll be coming back to it over and over again.

Creative And Productive

Fans are creative people. It's part of their passion, really; they are driven to create and to express that love. Whatever they care about, it seems to quickly result in them making and doing things at an incredible level of involvement and detail.

Fans create **stuff** – websites, fanfiction, conventions; they build, bring forth, and just plain *do*. An hour on the internet will yield you fanart, fanfiction, convention listings, information pages, custom wikis and more. A life among fans and geeks, such as my own, will leave you with the unavoidable conclusion that fans can be incredibly productive.

Yes, some of what fans produce may not be good; some of it may just be plain bad. The art may not be professional, the writing may

be awful, or the website may be a bit ugly. This doesn't matter - the fan's passion and desire to create, driving them on even when skills are lacking or undeveloped, is admirable. The love is there and the ability to apply that love is there, even when unpolished.

But it *can* be polished. Fans can hammer away at their costume designing, grow a tiny convention into a huge event, improving as they go. You probably know a few people in fandom who do professional-level work for fun alongside their day job.

Even if a fan isn't that good at something, they will work at it again and again because they love it and want to be involved. They will improve if only through sheer hard-headedness.

Fans make things. In fact, you probably have a lot of work to your name because of your enthusiasms, you just may not appreciate it of even realize it. When you appreciate it . . .

 . . . well then you see just what you're capable of. Then you can use it in, say, a career.

Involved
Fans are involved. Makers make things. Otaku run conventions. Sports fans go to games and make their living rooms into mini-museums. Music fans share stories and music and tales of bands new, old, long broken-up or even long passed away.

Fandom does not sit on the sidelines and watch, or just produce works for no one. Fandom is about doing things with others. Fandom holds get-togethers. Fandoms build communities. Fandom means long late-night discussions online. Fans are active, connected, and interact with each other and with the things they love.

Fans also get involved in the larger world. They do charities. They write reviews. They speak to the news. They become part of causes

related to their interests. They write books on those causes, including, as you noticed, on careers.

Just sitting around liking something isn't fandom. Being *involved* – that's fandom and that gives you power. If you're good at getting involved in one thing, you can use that drive in others. If you're well-involved in some geeky or fannish community, you have a lot of networking tools to use.

Involvement means drive, creation, connections, and options. You, as a fan, geek, otaku, metalhead, or what have you are jacked into a community that you can work for and work with. There might even be some career options there.

Persistent

Fans persist. They love something deep enough that they'll be around after the movie is over, the team has been renamed, or the band has broken up. They are the memory of what was cared about, its maintenance, and even its revival.

I remember fans supporting such shows as *Beauty and the Beast* and *Firefly* when they were cancelled. The fans didn't stop when the show went away, they fought for revival, remembered, and stayed active.

Fans also will produce new work once the old one is forgotten by all else. A trip online will find music videos made of TV series you never heard of. Entire virtual series of TV shows long gone are created and published for free reading. 'Zines old and new record the history of ideas and inspiration, some from long before the internet was available to share information.

Fans persist long after others have given up. They endure and they remember. That's a lot of willpower, a lot of knowledge, a lot of history and a lot of potential right there.

Just think of all the things a fan may know that others may not remember, all that knowledge waiting to be tapped. All that history to teach. All those examples to use. All that sheer endurance that can be brought to bear.

Conclusion

Fans are not just people who "like" stuff. Fans are people with blazing, applied passion. Fans are people who do, create, and express themselves, even beyond their limits. Fans are involved with their works, with each other, with what they love. Fans don't forget.

You're a fan? This is you – passionate, creative, involved, and persistent. You have the ability to care, the ability to make, the ability to get connected, and the inclination to keep at it.

You're more amazing than you realize – and I'm not just saying that because you bought this book (though I appreciate that as well).

So all we need to do now that you're getting to be aware of your general awesomeness is show you how to use it specifically. All these things you do, all these communities, all this passion, can be channeled – into your career.

So, What's Next?

OK, you got your pep talk. If you don't buy that as a fan, you are a person possessed of passion, creativity, and the mantle of history, go back and keep reading this chapter over. This is who you *are*.

So, we've looked at why fans are cool. The next question is how do you become a professional fan, a progeek or profan, or just someone that uses their hobbies to improve their career?

You learn to see things differently. You learn to see the power that's in your interests.

You adopt a "Profan" perspective. We'll cover that next – but first a review and next steps!

Chapter Review:
• Fans and hobbyists have specific advantages in their interests that provide them opportunities.
• Fans are passionate.
• Fans are highly creative and productive.
• Fans are involved in their interests.
• Fans are highly persistent.

Resources And Next Steps:
• Though listing the histories of individual fandoms here would be a series books itself, it helps to know the history of your fandom if you want to appreciate it. You may want to read up about your fandom and what people in it achieved. If there isn't any recorded history, may I humbly suggest you be the one to start researching and writing it up?
• Reading up about famous figures in your fandom, such as famous comic artists, or great writers, is also inspiring since many successful people were once fans. A good biography or autobiography can be inspiring (I'll cover this more in the chapter on Role Models).
• Though yours truly doesn't like to keep piles of stuff around, I find keeping newsletters, printouts, books on the histories of hobbies, etc. are often inspiring. It can't hurt to preserve some history – and find some inspiration. A digital or physical scrapbook or personal collection could be quite valuable.

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Chapter 4: Explore Career Possibilities

Our interests expose us to a lot of career possibilities, and the opportunities to learn about them and explore them.

CHAPTER GOALS:
- Figure out what obvious, "spotlight" jobs your hobbies taught you about – and that appeal to you.
- Brainstorm and learn about careers that make your fandom possible – but that you'd never thought of.
- Evaluate careers and jobs you don't want – and why.
- Consider how your hobbies can teach you more.

Last chapter should have helped you get some ideas for your career, as well as filling out a lot of note cards. Or maybe you've already got some career ideas that you want to investigate. Either way it's time for us (and by that I mean you and me via this book) to start finding out about *specific* career possibilities.

General ideas need an actual manifestation for them to work and ensure you get a paycheck. So let's start figuring out how all your inspirations and ideas can help you explore specific jobs and career options.

Fortunately, since fandom is about stuff people make and do, you're going to encounter plenty of information about those people. That stuff-making means potential career opportunities. Just being involved in a hobby can teach you about what you can do for a living.

Someone had to create the things that you're a fan of, after all. Your fandom will introduce you to an array of people who might point the way for an exciting career. On top of that, who knows what information has lodged in your head over the years and

decades just waiting to be used?

You just have to realize what you know about careers – or can find out. So let's get to it!

What Careers Do You Already Know About?

Chances are you already have encountered a lot of career ideas in fandom. You've met authors, artists, baseball players, musicians, or what have you. You've seen people in action and read, played or eaten the results. You've met people at fan events who do fascinating things. You intimately know a lot about careers because you know a lot of people who *have* careers.

Plenty of the things you've done, seen, or used point to career possibilities. There's a chance you know about them quite a bit, you just may not know that you know.

I'm here to tell you that you already know a lot. You know?

Once you find out how much you're aware of careers, you can also find out how to learn more about them. Chances are there's an enormous buffet of opportunities out there you didn't even appreciate. Believe me, I've had many an experience in my career where I've said "hey, that'd be a great job . . . why didn't *I* realize that?"

So first up, let's take an inventory of what you know about and how you know it, career-wise and hobby-wise.

Exercise 4-1:
Sit down, get out your notebook, and write down the interesting people you've met in your hobbies – and what they do for a living. They could be celebrities or just someone who runs a meetup group. This may take awhile, but don't feel you have to list everyone – there's no need for trying to remember that guy who did that thing at a convention six years ago.

As you do this, other interesting careers may come to mind. Go on and put them in the list as well.

Exercise 4-2:
In your fandom/hobbies have you been to any job/career-oriented events like seminars on using software, writer's groups, etc.? Did any of them point out or describe careers you like? Did you follow up on any of these?

If not, why didn't you? Next convention, club meeting, etc. go attend one or two.

Exercise 4-3:
Did your brainstorming in the last two exercises make you think of anyone in fandom that that you know well enough to ask for career advice? Give them a call/email/whatever – go on, be bold but friendly. Sure they may not respond (we all get busy), but you might as well try.

Who Makes What You Like?

So when it comes down to using your hobbies as a career guide, one of the first places people look is "who makes what I like?" Who writes the books? Who creates the games? Who stars in the cooking show? Some of these may even intersect with the last section, because these are people you've also met.

I call these spotlight jobs, because usually the people doing them are "in the spotlight," as it were. It might not be a big spotlight, but it's there.

As simplistic as it is, a lot of people take great satisfaction in the idea of creating what they love for a living. It might not always be the same as the big names but it can be very fulfilling and worth looking into. Also, it plays on your passions (your Areas of Interest) and possibly your Skills and Values we discussed earlier.

Now I will warn you that this can come perilously close to the "Must-Do Job Myth" I describe in Appendix B – thinking there's only one or two jobs suited to your interests. This approach can be limiting, simplistic, and discouraging. So dive into this idea and keep an open mind.

Fortunately, we'll cover opening your mind in the next section. But now, let's see how you can look at what you like, who makes it, and find out what appeals to you!

Exercise 4-4:
List the things you like in your hobbies that are concrete – games, websites, books, shows, art, etc. You probably can do this without paper, but it helps to write it down.

Now write down the professions that produces those items – the ones that immediately spring to mind. Don't drill down too far, because we'll cover that later.

Do any of these appeal to you?

Exercise 4-5:
Look at the lists of careers from Exercise 4-4 and pick three to explore (in fact you may have explored them in other exercises). Take an hour at least to research ones that appeal to you to get an idea of if you'd like them.

(A quick hint – a lot of these exercises involve listing jobs to explore. Maybe you can keep a list and then research them all at once.)

Exercise 4-6:
Would any of the careers in 4-5 involve working with specific kinds of companies, in specific locations, etc.? Does any of that appeal to you? If so, could it be that your interest is in those things and not the jobs themselves?

Who Makes What You Like Possible?

OK we've looked at those careers that make the things you like and do the things you enjoy. It was probably interesting, but also probably more than a bit obvious and maybe a bit discouraging. Sometimes the things everyone loves (including you) are made by a limited population. Maybe it turns out you really don't like these jobs.

Maybe a job in the spotlight isn't for you.

But then again not everyone wants one of these "spotlight" jobs or some of the well-known ones. Maybe they can't do them, or would actually not like them, or don't like the pressure and public attention. One glance at scandal news or reading an interview with someone with a "spotlight" job can be pretty disheartening.

But all these things you love? The shows and books and games and clothes? It's not just the "spotlight" jobs that make them possible. There's a giant infrastructure of talent that makes things happen; the people in the spotlight are just a part of it that you *notice*.

Someone has to edit the books of a famous author A show is created by a legion of talented individuals. A museum is a group effort. Sporty high-tech cars are art, engineering, and design fused into one by a very large team.

These "support" jobs or "infrastructure" jobs that make things possible are jobs you should definitely consider. Also there's more of them available, and they usually lack the withering gaze of the public eye – which may be what you want.

Support jobs or other behind-the scene jobs also give you a chance to move up in your career or even your industry. Nothing says you have to do the same thing forever; a job that may not be in the spotlight still plugs you into a network of contacts, knowledge, and opportunities in case you want to go to a spotlight job later.

Besides, as noted, you might like to stay there.

I'm also very fond of these jobs because they make us aware of how the world really works. We often pay attention to a few prominent individuals or names, and forget the massive activities that make what we love possible. This knowledge can help you understand and appreciate the economy, cultures, and people much better.

Oh, and sometimes you'd be surprised at the benefits of these jobs. Just because you don't know someone's name doesn't mean they're not doing very well. Who makes more, that artist you love or one of the programmers that makes the software they use?

Now, let's get to some exercises!

Exercise 4-7:
Take your list of "spotlight" jobs you'd like to do from Exercise 4-5. Next to each job list all the jobs you can think of that make it possible, support it, and so on. You'll find you learned a lot in your fandom, and a lot will spring to mind: when an author mentioned their editor, an artist mentioned the software they used, etc.

Exercise 4-8:
How much do you know about these "infrastructure" jobs and how did you learn this information? Was it from your hobbies? Does that give you any opportunities for education to pursue, like attending panels you usually ignore at a convention or joining a specific club?

Exercise 4-9:
Look at the lists of careers from 4-7 and pick three to explore (again, you may have explored them in other exercises). Take an hour at least to research ones that appeal to you to get an idea of whether you'd like them – but it may take longer as they're a bit more obscure.

What Don't You Want To Do?

As we find out what careers we want from our hobbies, you can also find there's plenty of things you **don't** want to do.

Sometimes this isn't a surprise. Sometimes it's quite an eye-opener. In other cases it may just be low ambition or low self esteem. Either way, it's enlightening.

Face it, some stuff doesn't fit you. Some jobs and careers really are just miserable, at least to you. However, the "why" of that is pretty informative. It may show your interests, weaknesses, ethical concerns, lack of tolerance for B.S., and so on. You find out a lot about you by deciding what you don't want to do.

Once I thought I wanted to be a video game programmer, but in my Engineering days I was really more inclined to databases and inventory systems. I really wouldn't have been suited as a programmer in such a career.

So when you ask what you want to do – also ask what you don't want to do. As your hobbies have exposed you to a number of careers, you've probably had more thought put into this than you realize.

Exercise 4-10:
Are there any jobs from the lists you made for this chapter that you **definitely** don't want to do? Not can't – won't. Why is that? Are your reasons good? ("I don't want to" is an *excellent* reason by the way).

Exercise 4-11:
Wanted to make or do the things you're a fan of, or be involved with them, and decided it wasn't for you? Why is that?

What would prove you wrong?

Learn More About Specific Careers

Fandom is a fantastic way to learn about careers directly. I'd even risk saying that since I was a wee geek, it's become more career-oriented over the years. Er, years. I mean . . . oh hell, I mean decades. I'm an **elder** geek.

We're usually aware that we are learning about careers, but we're not always aware of how much knowledge we have available. There's that panel at a convention, or that web resource, or that book (not this one of course, this one you did pick up) that we never look at. We almost take for granted that there's fannish "stuff" for careers – and can forget.

So don't forget. Make yourself *aware*.

In every extended group of hobbyists and enthusiasts, there are always tutorials, panels, events, clubs, groups, books, and so on meant to help you out. You, plugged into your networks of fans and geeks and the like, have seen or heard of these, or can at least find them. When you make it a conscious decision, you have a wealth of career knowledge at your fingertips.

This goes far beyond just my simple suggestions to take an hour to read up on a career or a job. Fandom provides us some very deep opportunities.

So go use them. Here, I'll help you out with – and this may shock you – some exercises!

Exercise 4-12:
Have you ever been to any career panels at a convention, sponsored by a club, or that was otherwise involved in your fandom? If so, which ones were the most helpful? Which weren't?

Exercise 4-13:
If you wanted to know more about a career that you were interested in, and wanted to leverage your fandom connections, how would you go about it? Go to a convention? Ask people?

Have you done any of these things before? If not, why not?

Exercise 4-14:
What fan events do you go to – clubs, meetups, conventions, and the like, that have career-related panels, workshops, etc.? Find some and see if you can go so you can see if they help you out.

Exercise 4-15:
What fan events do you go to that *should* have career-related panels, workshops, and the like? If they don't, suggest they should. In fact . . .

Exercise 4-16:
List five career events, seminars, or training sessions that you want to see your various fan groups do. What should they have in order to help someone like you? Perhaps you can evangelize.

Closing
Our hobbies and interests pretty much shove potential career opportunities in our face. Sometimes it's a bit depressing as we realize we may not want to do them, but the opportunity to get some inspiration and ideas really helps out.

Our fellow fans, geeks, and the like also want to learn as well, so there's inevitably events to help people out. Doing research, taking advantage of opportunities, and becoming involved, can really teach you a lot. If there's not something you need, you can always suggest it – and chances are a lot of people will appreciate it.

There are a lot of profans just like you that want to move forward. Maybe you should team up with them – but I'll talk networking later!

One important thing to keep in mind – your fandom is one great source of career ideas but is obviously not the only one. The other brainstorming exercises, your own research, and more, can help you get a good handle on what you want to do and can do career-wise.

Chapter Review:

• Fandom often exposes you to many possible professions and professional options.

• Your interests are made possible by prominent individuals like authors and programmers, and their careers may work for you – especially as you love that area.

• Your fandoms (and the people famous for them) are made possible by a network of talented people – their careers may fit you.

• Evaluating careers tells you a lot about yourself.

• Your hobbies, which often involve events, groups, clubs, online resources, etc. can teach you more about careers in depth.

Resources And Next Steps:

• Much like the last chapter, you should check out government resources on careers.

• Also like the last chapter, you'll want to see who you can network with that does the jobs you're considering.

• Many companies you want to work for – and industries you want to work – for have job boards. It doesn't matter if you're qualified or even know what you want to do. Visiting them can tell you what kind of jobs are out there and what they require.

• Many professional associations have events for potential careerists, and if any of your contacts are part of them, they may point you in the right direction. I *strongly* recommend joining a professional association that fits your interests as soon as possible. You can usually find one online or by simply asking people. Also I'll bring thus up again, trust me.

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(Full book available at www.informotron.com)

About The Author

Steven Savage is a lifetime geek. Starting with a childhood interest in science, science fiction and computers, to an IT career that started in his twenties, he's never stopped being an unrepentant enthusiast for video games, technology, media, and more.

His goal is to help his fellow geeks, fans, and otaku realize their professional potential, personal goals, and place in society. To that end he writes books and columns, blogs, speaks at conventions, and more.

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You can find his books at www.informotron.com.

Steve's Books:
• Convention Career Connection: Putting the Pro Into Your Con
• Epic Resume Go! Resume Creation Made Exciting!
• Fan To Pro: Leveling Up Your Career Through Your Hobbies
• Focused Fandom: Cosplay, Costuming, and Careers
• Focused Fandom: Fanart, Fanartists, and Careers
• Quest For Employment: Lessons from The Job Search Adventure

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