Focused Fandom: Cosplay, Costuming, and Careers

(SAMPLE)

By Steven Savage

Focused Fandoms:
Cosplay, Costuming, and Careers

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First Edition

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DEDICATION:

This book is dedicated to everyone who ever asked how they can turn their hobbies into careers, and everyone who succeeded and went on to teach others.

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Introduction To Sample

This is the Sample version of "Focused Fandom: Cosplay, Costuming, and Careers", a book on turning Cosplay and Costuming interests into Career opportunities. It's a chance for you, the future reader, to see what the full book has to offer.

What's in this Sample?
This Sample contains one chapter from each of the major sections:

• **Edges** – This section is on the special advantages people into Cosplay and Costuming have in their careers and how they can be applied to careers.
• **Careers** – This section focuses on careers well-suited to people with an interest in Cosplay/Costuming.
• **ToDo's** – This section is on must-do activities for anyone wanting to leverage their Cosplay/Costuming hobby in their career.

What's in the Full Book?
• Over 50 different Edges, Career profiles, and To Do's to help you in your career.
• Exercises to help you investigate, explore, and implement your career plans.
• Helpful resources for your career plans.
• Profiles of all the interviewees who helped make this book possible!

Please visit http://www.focusedfandom.com/ to purchase your copy!

Edges (Sample)

"Cosplay has awakened a love for manual work I didn't realize I had in me all along and it changed the way I look at store bought things."
- **Fé**, http://fechan.deviantart.com/

Connecting With People

"Conventions are a great place to network! After all, they say it's not *what* you know, it's *who* you know."
- "**The Chainmail Chick**"
http://www.facebook.com/TheChainmailChick

Though this book harps on the importance of networking (especially in the "To Do" section), one thing that is easy to forget in cosplay and costuming is you've got a major Edge in getting connected to other people. You may forget this because you're doing it all the time.

This Edge may be useful for professional purposes (which is the focus of this book), but it can also be for fun, making friends, finding a roommate, etc.

Simply, Cosplayers/costumers have a powerful Edge in getting connected to other people – yes, networking (even if we hear that word thrown around way too much).

Think of the advantages you have:

Connection: People identify strongly with their costuming/cosplay activities. This gives you a quick way to connect with people - shared experiences, knowledge, and language. It's a fast and reliable way to bond with others - and those bonds can provide many benefits.

Events: Cosplay/costuming gives you many events to attend to show off your work, see the work of others - and of course, meet people. A quick look at virtually any site on conventions and events will help you find plenty of cosplay/costuming happenings. In a few cases, you'll find entire events just dedicated to your hobby and maybe even your specific interest.

Resources: The internet has a variety of resources for cosplayers to connect with each other. If you're looking to use your hobby to meet others, you've got plenty of opportunities.

Groups: There are also a variety of formal and semi-formal groups that you can join, from small cosplay teams to giant costuming organizations. If you're looking to connect with others, or even find if an area is worth moving to, these may be something to look into. (Later we'll explore the importance of starting your own organization.)

As a cosplayer and/or costumer, you've got an incredible chance to connect with other people. You'll have many networking opportunities professionally when you use resource cosplay/costuming gives you.

Want to start a business? Need feedback on your education plans? Looking for a job? All that connecting that cosplay/costuming lets you do can help you with these needs and more.

NEXT STEPS:

Evaluate
Are you trying to network more? Should you? If so consider how you'd use cosplay/costuming. Side note - my guess is you should do more.

You might find you're a bit of an introvert – and focusing on the connecting aspect of cosplay/costuming can help you overcome that.

Look For Groups
First off, check local event calendars and cosplay websites to see what groups may be in your area. They're worth investigating to see if you want to join up.

Look For Events
Check out events that may be of interest to you. Some useful resources:

- http://www.upcomingcons.com/
- http://www.conventionscene.com/
- http://www.meetup.com/ - can help you find large or small groups of all sorts of interests.

(We'll discuss conventions more next section).

Use Cosplay/Costuming Resources:
I've found there's a lot of networking/social sites, especially for cosplayers:

- http://www.cosplay.com/
- http://www.cosplaylab.com/
- http://en.curecos.com/

There are also many costuming groups one can find (though I find they're often regional in my limited research).

Find Local Resources
Newspapers, city websites, and even county/province websites will have useful guides for events.

"The act of cosplay itself has taught me how to network a bit better, as well as how to talk to people in potential business situations."
- **Miko Simons**, aka "Luck in Spaces",
http://www.luckinspades.com/

Careers (Sample)

"Someone has to make it, and that someone could be you!"
- **Carissa**

Modeling

"Cosplay led to modeling, and modeling led to more costuming, and now costuming is leading to more modeling."
- **Cynthia Leigh**, http://www.cynthia-leigh.com/

If you're into cosplay and costumes, consider a career in modeling.

In fact, even as I type those words it seems an incredibly obvious statement - if you're good with outfits, makeup, posing, why not consider modeling? It sort of follows.

I think people don't think of modeling because a lot of people think of modeling as a high-level, glamorous, limited profession (much like acting). For the big-name models who earn high figures and travel the world, yes. But there's a lot of other modeling careers that don't come to mind right away when people think "model".

Those ads on TV you see with people? They're models or actors. Those people smiling in catalogues may be models. The people posing at booths at event shows, or even doing mocap in video games – models/actors. The people in those still ads in a magazine are models.

I wasn't aware of just how far modeling could go myself until two incidents came together in my head:

- A friend of mine casually mentioned he was modeling. It was really sitting around for a product ad. But he got paid. I never realized how widespread modeling was until then.
- At GDC I ran into one of the models of Charisma + 2 (http://www.charismaplus2.com/) - a company that provided models and hosts for "game events." Some might call them "booth babes" and "booth boys" but they were smart and savvy people who knew games - and makeup, and dressing, and communication.   This taught me about how specialized

modeling could be.

If you're a cosplayer, just think of all you know relevant to modeling, and all the traits you have:

- You may look like the right kind of model. This doesn't mean you're incredibly handsome or beautiful (though you may be) - it does mean you have the right look for what some people want. Maybe you're smoldering or open-looking, or menacing and strange. Someone is going to want that.
- You've learned how to make yourself look different. You may know makeup and hairstyles and poise. Whatever you look like, you may have mastered the trick of transforming yourself with simple actions, a bit of eyeliner, and the right style of hair.
- You know costumes. You know how to wear them, tweak them, make the most out of them. That's a big advantage as a model – you can repair on your own, assess outfits before you put them on, etc.
- You know how to become someone else. This is a good thing to know to fit into a role - even a simple "sit-with-a-product" modeling job requires you to be someone ("I want you to believe in your hemorrhoid cream!").
- You probably have one heck of a portfolio of you being different people – and for that matter different species or genders – thanks to costuming/cosplay.

Of course modeling may not be for you due to all sorts of reasons. Cosplay also prepares you for plenty of careers related to the industry:

- Making outfits.
- Makeup.
- Hairstyling.
- Teamwork and team planning.
- Tolerating people's idiosyncrasies.

Even if you never set foot on stage, at a renfest, or even put on a costume. Even if you're behind the scenes in costuming and costly - you may well have a career in modeling behind the scenes as well.

NEXT STEPS:

Modeling Agencies
Go hit the internet and look up local modeling agencies - there are sure to be a bunch of them if you're in any larger city/megaregion. Check their websites for opportunities to get an idea of what you may be in for.

Find communities
You'll want to find a community to support you. http://www.modelmayhem.com/ is an excellent place to start.

Portfolio
Make sure you start building a portfolio of work - and your costuming/cosplay is a great way to do it.

Find a Photographer
This is mentioned in its own chapter in "To Dos". So do it anyway – get someone who can take pictures of you that look professional.

Consider an Agent
You may need to condor an agent. Do this after finding fellow models to get advice from.

(Be sure to check out http://www.charismaplus2.com/ to see a "non-standard" geeky modeling agency. Check out their models to see how there is a wide demand for different looks and people - and then still end up feeling inadequate in the face of all those good looking people.)

To Do's (Sample)

"Never let anyone tell you no, and never think an idea is too big to be done."
- **YuffieBunny,** http://yuffiebunny.com/

Networking

"In addition to honing my skills in costume/garment construction, makeup, and posing, it also allowed me to reach out and become connected to a large network of fellow fans as well as gain many valuable connections with skilled photographers."
- **Gina "Chuwei"**, http://www.fourthewin.org/

If you've done any career research, talked to any career counselor or coach, you've heard time and time again that Networking is the key to success. You're told to meet people, connect with them, etc. You're also probably sick of it because you hear it all the time.

Yet, we keep getting the same advice over and over again: Network. Meet people. Connect professionally. I'm telling you this even now . . .

Why do we keep hearing about until we're sick of it?
1) It's true - Networking is a major key to career success.
2) Most people are pretty lousy at it.

I've often wondered why people seem bad at business networking. There are two reasons, both of which your cosplaying and costuming experiences can actually overcome.

First, business-style networking often seems boring. Who wants to hand out cards to people you don't like? Who wants to go to mixers to discuss things no one is interested in? The constant emphasis on networking in careers has taken the fun out of it for many people, and made events boring. It makes being social work – which it should never be (at least entirely)

Second, business-style networking is forced on us by the aforementioned literature and classes. We're kind of sick of hearing about it and tune it out – and then we don't network.

Yet we know we need to network (because we keep hearing about it). We need to make connections for our jobs, go to professional events, keep up with mentors, etc. It's just . . . it seems to be boring, businesslike, and not that enjoyable.

Networking shouldn't be boring or only business. It should be fun and exciting and social, an effort to connect with people all the time.

Cosplay and costuming is your chance to do networking your way - and have fun at it.

Being a costumer/cosplayer means you're meeting plenty of people at conventions, in groups, at stores. You're going to be meeting all of these fascinating and interesting people all the time in situations you enjoy. It's networking without the enforced boredom of expectation that "it's got to be business."

It also means that it's not going to be forced. It's going to be connecting with people your way, on your schedule. You'll be able to do it freer, and frankly happier.

Think of all the people you'll meet due to your hobby. There's your cosplay group. There's other costuming groups. There's people at stores. There are merchants at conventions. There's the voice actors whose characters you've dressed as. There's the movie props guru whose panel you've attended at a convention.

Right now you are meeting a legion of interesting people due to your hobby.

You might even think your hobbies make you a bit weird or odd. It doesn't matter (or if it does, it's in a good way). Go to a convention or a meet-up or a costuming event and realize how many people are just like you. Networking is a great way to remember you're not alone.

So it's time to take advantage of it and build your network of connections. It's going to be far more interesting than any by-the-numbers business networking group held because someone thinks they should.

NEXT STEPS:

Build a Presence
You want to make sure you have a personal website or place for people to visit and find your information.

Join http://www.linkedin.com/, the business networking website. It's an invaluable tool for all professionals, and asking if you're on LinkedIn is a common question in networking.

Have a website (which we'll cover later) so there's one way to find you.

Get Business Cards
Make sure you have business cards of some kind. Period. You can get them made cheaply at office supply stores, or at http://www.zazzle.com/.

A good business card has:

• Your name.
• What you do.
• A link to a personal/professional website.
• Contact email.
• Other contact information.
• Your personality on display.

Get In A Networking Mindset
Conventions, going to a store, group costuming gatherings, etc. are all chances to meet new people. Have your cards ready and be prepared to exchange information with exciting new people. Don't

force it. Instead, just be ready when your intuition says "I have to get to know this person."

Join Groups
I commented on this previously, but seriously – do it.

"My biggest wakeup call was Anime Boston 2004, my first convention, where I realized how truly un-alone I was."
- Erika J. Weatherbee, http://www.facebook.com/pages/E-Bee-Photography/117394141675887

"I succeeded, and then I moved a thousand miles away to college in another state. Suddenly I knew nobody. So I walked onstage once again not to win anything, but to make friends."
- greyrondo, http://houseofpavonine.wordpress.com/

Want More?

Want to read more? Ready to use your cosplay and costuming for your career?

You can purchase the book at the Focused Fandom Website:

http://www.focusedfandom.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. To that end he writes books, blogs at http://www.fantopro.com/, speaks at conventions, and more.

He lives in Silicon Valley, which, if you think about it, is really appropriate.

To contact Steve please visit http://www.stevensavage.com/.

Steve's Other Books:

Fan To Pro: Unlocking Career Insights With Your Hobbies (http://www.fantoprobook.com/)

Convention Career Connection: Putting the Pro Into Your Con (http://www.conventioncareerconnection.com/)

Progeek Rising: The Best of Fan To Pro Volume 1 (http://www.bestoffantopro.com/)

Inhuman Resources: The Best of Fan To Pro Volume 2 (http://www.bestoffantopro.com/)