

"CJ McClanahan delivers a compact philosophy with five easy to absorb strategies. His common sense and practical advice is packed with vivid examples. I rate this entertaining and inspirational read 'best of show.'"

— **Mickey Maurer, Author and Entrepreneur**

"This is a dynamite book. I'm one of the last people who would look to a book for guidance on living the life I imagine for myself. Yet Thrive is eminently readable and packed with great ideas and tools to do just that. If anyone has doubts that his or her life has the meaning and enrichment all of us aspire to have, then I would strongly encourage them to read and follow what CJ has compiled in Thrive."

— **Kevin Ober, Executive Director**

Indiana Republican State Committee

"Thrive is an excellent practical guide to better living written by a man who practices what he writes. Read it. Then live it! If you do you will find true success."

— **Dr. Greg P. Sipes, Clinical Psychologist**

Senior Partner, Indiana Health Group, Inc.

Founder, nextVoice, LLC

"Thrive is not your typical business book. CJ McClanahan is an author that "gets it" that we Americans live crazy busy lives, and he provides guidelines and real life examples to help us apply the lessons, all with a sense of humor and honesty that makes it hard to put down. Thrive is an insightful and relevant message to help business people not only create the success they desire, but enjoy the ride ... and live an extraordinary life."

— **Nicole Bickett, CEO**

Vision Bridge

THRIVE

Seize your extraordinary life
with five simple strategies.

CJ McClanahan

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FOREWORD

Another self-help book? Can there really be anything new to say? Our modern era of easy publishing has led to a proliferation of “how to” self-help books. I’ve read dozens perhaps hundreds of these books. Some are helpful, few provide any new perspective and, most significantly, too often the credentials or credibility of the author is suspect. Of course the last consideration, credibility of the author, is the most important. Anyone can distill a set of principles into a system for life success but do they live it? Whenever you find an author who validates his or her thesis with their everyday life then take interest in what they are saying. Read and reread his or her material.

CJ is a genuine, sincere, authentic man. He “walks the talk.” I can offer no more profound recommendation of any book except that the author’s “heart is in the right place.” This is true with CJ. His heart is in the right place and he attempts to walk the talk every day in every way. This alone validates CJ’s message and suggests this is an important read. But there’s more!

While this book speaks of timeless principles and of sure-fired strategies for a better, more satisfying life it also notably speaks of a truth too often under emphasized or even ignored in our society - accountability. Accountability to God, spouse, family and friends and more: accountability to one’s self. That’s right, accountability to one’s self. Without it there is no accountability to God, spouse, family or friends. Accountability starts with personal reflection followed by a fearless personal inventory and then personal

resolve to live better. After all, we really manage only one thing – ourselves.

Read CJ's book. Embrace his philosophy, the principles, of successful living. They will work! But not unless you are inspired. It is not principles but emotion that moves us to action. Be inspired by his life. Realize that if you will follow his lead and authentically live this thesis you will succeed. It's a sure-fired strategy to the life you've always wanted.

Dr. Greg Sipes
SEPTEMBER 2010

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CHAPTER 1
THE SELF IMPROVEMENT INDUSTRY

*“Self-improvement is the name of the game,
and your primary objective is to strengthen
yourself, not to destroy an opponent.”*

– Maxwell Maltz
US plastic surgeon, motivational author,
and creator of the Psycho-Cybernetics

I know a guy named Bill who is a self-improvement junkie. He reads all the self-improvement books he can get his hands on, listens to tapes, and attends a wide array of seminars. Every time I see him, he spends the entire conversation passionately trying to convince me that he has just uncovered the key to unlimited passive income, perfect health, daily organization, conflict resolution, marketing, sales, or leadership.

I admire Bill's commitment to constant and never-ending self-improvement. No matter how much time and money he has spent on learning, he never stops looking for that next amazing breakthrough.

For example, a few years back, he read Robert Allen's *No Money Down*, and was convinced that he could flip houses on his lunch break and retire by the time he was twenty-eight years old. Next, he read *The E-Myth*, by Michael Gerber, the bestselling business book that inspired Bill to invest in an operations manual for his small business. Another of his favorites was *The 4-Hour Workweek*, by Timothy Ferriss, which convinced Bill that he should be able to run his business from a beach in Cancun. Unfortunately, after more than seven years of consistently filling his mind with the latest and greatest self-improvement information, Bill has yet to flip his first house; he lost his operations manual and hasn't even been to Cancun.

If you're reading this book, chances are that you know a person like Bill. Maybe you even recognize Bill every time you look in a mirror. You saw the cover of *Thrive*, liked the graphics, and thought, "This looks interesting. Maybe I've found a book that will help me reach my goals!"

While I appreciate the enthusiasm and believe that this book contains a very simple and powerful formula for success, I doubt it will be the end-all, be-all. (However, if it is, please tell all your friends!)

On that note, I want to let you in on a little secret about the self-

improvement industry: there's nothing new to be written about self-improvement.

While visiting Borders® approximately three years ago, a book caught my eye titled, *The Magic of Thinking Big*, by David Schwartz. I thought, "Finally, a book that can help push me through to the next level and help me to think BIG!" This book had some fantastic insights, including the importance of believing in yourself, filling your environment with successful people, and a positive attitude.

It was a great book; in fact for the right person, I could see it being "life-changing" because it pointed out some simple and powerful advice that applies to everyone. However, for me, it was just a reinforcement of ideas and concepts I had read many times over. After reading the last page, I decided to flip to the copyright page and see when it was written. Shockingly, it was first published in 1959! At that very moment, I realized that these fundamental self-improvement principles have been around for more than fifty years. (Actually, quite a bit more—*Think and Grow Rich*, produced by one of the earliest writers to focus on self-help, Napoleon Hill, was published in 1937.)

For years, the self-improvement/goal setting/"get better quick" industry (my industry, by the way), has been repackaging the same ideas and concepts in the hope that someone will eventually find a combination of words on paper that will lead to a meaningful change in behavior.

Here's the interesting thing about self-improvement books, seminars, and audio programs: They don't work unless you work. These authors can provide you with a crystal-clear map, but it's your journey, not theirs. If you choose to ignore their teachings then you might win an award for reading the most books, but it's unlikely that you will change your behavior and achieve your dreams.

That's why I wrote this book.

I firmly believe that I have developed a simple plan for helping you achieve *your* extraordinary life. In addition, I have structured this 149-page lesson plan to ensure that you make a handful of behavioral changes along the way.

This is a journey, and, just like any other trip you have travelled in your life, it will be filled with some great stops, fantastic views, and interesting surprises. At other times, you will be frustrated and maybe even a little scared.

Whatever happens, remember, this journey is not a sprint. Our goal isn't to reach the finish line faster than anyone else. The purpose is to enjoy the scenery, while learning and developing a handful of habits that will open up the extraordinary life that is already all around you.

Let's go.

WHAT I REALLY WANT YOU TO REMEMBER...

Let's be honest: the minute you put down this book, you are going to switch to another activity that will bombard you with information; regardless of how compelling my book has been, you will forget most of what you have read. As a result, at the end of each chapter, I have provided you with a handful of key points that I really want you to remember. When you are trying to impress your friends with how smart you are, it is no longer necessary to go and re-read the entire book—just review the end of each chapter!

- 1. It's Time to Just Do It™** – It's all been written before. Most people know what it takes to be successful, they just don't do it. The key is to slow down and implement what you have learned.
- 2. Enjoy the Journey** – Whatever you learn from this book or anything else in life, remember it is just a brief stop along a miraculous journey that is life. You will never know it all or get it figured out. Instead of trying to sprint to a so-called "finish line," slow down and enjoy the journey.

CHAPTER 2

EXTRAORDINARY LIFE DEFINED

*“Success means having the courage,
the determination, and the will to become the
person you believe you were meant to be.”*

– George Sheehan,
Andersen Consulting CEO, 1989 -1999

THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE DEFINED

Shortly after I started my business in 2003, I undertook an exercise that had been recommended by many of my peers—I created a Dream Board.

A Dream Board is a 24" x 36" poster covered with pictures of all the stuff that you dream about. It is designed to help you visualize what it is that you want to achieve, acquire, and become. The reason the board is regarded as being so powerful is because most people are visual, and once your brain has a visual image of exactly what it is that you want to achieve, you can figure out how to get it done.

I completely agree with this theory, and as a result, in the fall of 2003, my wife and I visited the local bookstore and bought a dozen magazines filled with pictures of our dreams and went to work.

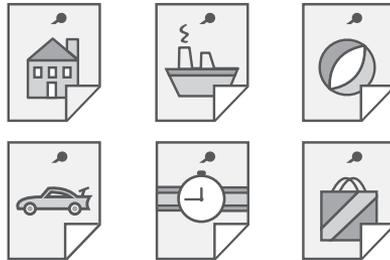
My pictures typically focused on “guy” stuff. I had a variety of luxury cars, a Rolex®, a big house in the mountains, a huge entertainment system, pictures of golf courses I wanted to play, a boat, and a wine cellar. I was going to be the MAN! My wife’s was slightly different; she had jewelry (tons of it), exotic foods, and pictures of exotic travel locations.

We put them all together on one big board, stood back, and marveled at our creations. The next day, the artwork was hung in our home office (a.k.a., the basement).

Like any good self-improvement disciple, I looked at this board every day, closed my eyes and imagined what it would be like to drive that BMW®, wear that Rolex®, and drive my boat towards our summer home on the lake. It was going to be fantastic.

Over the next few months, I noticed that I was looking at the board less and less. I rarely closed my eyes and really visualized the car, the watch, and other luxury items. A year went by before my wife and I concluded that visualization didn’t work, and the Dream Board made it into the garbage can.

DREAM BOARD



I had to find another way to help me stay focused on my goals and dreams.

Maybe I needed to go and buy a fake Rolex® and wear it every day to truly understand the joy of having a luxury watch. Perhaps I needed to listen to a friend’s recommendation and test drive a new BMW®, smelling the leather and feeling the experience of driving a fifty thousand dollar car. Maybe I could spend my weekends visiting open houses in extravagant neighborhoods in order to fulfill my yearning for a big house. After considering these alternatives, I decided that I needed to revisit my goals and dreams. Did I really want a luxury car, nice watch, and a huge house? Would having a boat next to a lake house make my life a living dream? I soon realized that the reason I was having trouble focusing on these items wasn’t that visualization didn’t work; my struggles were due to my focus on, and visualization of, the wrong things.

This brings us to the question that we all must ask ourselves: *How do you define your extraordinary life?* What is your purpose, and what are your goals and your dreams for an amazing future? This is *THE* question. *Nothing else matters* unless you give it some careful thought and consideration.

To illustrate this argument, consider the following hypothetical situation.

You are stranded in the middle of the ocean on a rubber raft with a set of oars and enough food and water to last for no more than two days. Approximately ten miles due north of your current location is a tiny island inhabited by a team of scientists studying the wildlife. These scientists have food, water, a phone, and transportation off the island. It will take you exactly two days to get there in your raft using the oars provided.



For the purpose of this example, you can't use the sun, the stars, or anything else to provide you with any direction.

A magic genie pops up a few feet in front of your raft and provides you with a choice. He tells you that he will grant you **one** of the following two items:

- A motor that will get you to the island within six hours
- A compass

Which item do you choose?

Unless you are a nerd and over-thinking the scenario, you will choose the compass. How much will a motor contribute if you have no idea where you are going? All you would do is drive all over an empty ocean until you ran out of food and water.

Let's consider a real life situation. Imagine that I am sitting in a room of successful business owners and executives, and I provide them with a choice:

- Make a commitment to regularly stop all activity and begin planning for the future with the entire senior management team.
- Work harder, stay later, and start more projects.

What do most of these busy executives choose?

That's right, they choose the second option. They operate under the assumption that carefully planning for the future is a luxury they don't have due to their demanding schedule. Never mind that they have no idea if all of this effort is getting them where they need to go.

As Dr. Steven Covey points out, you must "begin with the end in mind."¹ If you don't, you will continually mistake activity for achievement. This error will result in lots of effort (fifty-plus hour workweeks) that only brings you closer to someplace you don't want to be.

It's time to get out your compass and figure out how YOU define an extraordinary life.

Before we begin, understand that this is not going to be easy. It will require you to set aside all of your preconceived notions of success. For many of you, the process will result in the realization that you have been working towards the wrong goal for the majority of your professional career. This realization is often so frustrating that it results in the abandonment of the entire process.

Other people might struggle with this exercise because they don't believe they deserve an extraordinary life. Their parents worked sixty-plus hours a week, leaving little to no time for other things in their life, including family and friends. This continuous

absence from the spouse and children's lives resulted in the family members feeling loneliness and neglect, as well as a loss in self-esteem. These people who experienced such neglect might feel selfish for wanting more than they currently have.

The majority of you will struggle with this process because you convinced yourself that you lack the skills necessary to achieve the extraordinary life. You feel you aren't smart enough, don't have the right education, or don't have the professional background. Those big dreams are for others, not you.

While it is extremely important that you understand why you behave the way you do (of which thousands of books have been written about this topic), that is not the focus of this journey. I'm not concerned about where you have been; I'm here to help you understand where you are going.

Understanding your extraordinary life requires more than just changing the background of your computer to a beautiful sunset on a tropical island; it requires you to give some careful thought to a handful of important questions. Your answers will help paint a compelling picture that will inspire you to make the changes necessary for achieving your dreams.

Before we begin answering these questions, remember that this is YOUR extraordinary life. Resist the urge to build a "Dream Board" based upon what you see on television or read in *People*® magazine. Your answers should be designed to inspire one person—you.

QUESTION #1

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

I want you think about your perfect home. Is it in your current town or is it bigger? Does it have a swimming pool, a huge kitchen, or maybe even a guest house? Do you have multiple homes? Where are they located? How much time do you spend at each one?

As you go through this exercise, pay attention to the details. Your goal is to have a crystal-clear image; the more transparent the picture is in your mind, the easier it is for your brain to figure out how to achieve that image.

QUESTION #2

WITH WHOM DO YOU LIVE AND SPEND YOUR TIME?

I live in Indianapolis, and as I complete this book, our town and its inhabitants have just been through an awful winter with tons of snow and freezing cold temperatures. I hate winter. As a result, my answer to question one would never include Indianapolis, except for the fact that my answer to question two is more important to me than warm weather.

My family lives in Indianapolis, and my in-laws live three hours west in Illinois. As much as I would love to wake up every day and walk out on my patio greeted by sun and seventy-five degree weather, it is far more important that I get to spend quality time with my family. In addition, it is essential that my kids (ages four and seven) spend quality time with their family (not to mention the free babysitting we receive from their grandparents).

So, as you consider this question, keep in mind that your relationships are an important part of your life. In fact, a close friend of mine, Dr. Greg Sipes,² would argue that life is *only* about relationships. His belief, one with which I agree, is that no matter what you accumulate or achieve in life, it will mean absolutely nothing if you don't have meaningful relationships with the people close to you.

QUESTION #3

WHAT DO YOU DO PROFESSIONALLY?

Many people are tempted to answer this question by saying, "Nothing; I don't have to work in my perfect life." Let me provide a little guidance on this question. I think it's okay to have a goal

of not working in order to provide for yourself financially, but if you are reading this book, chances are good that you are a high achiever and will need to do something professionally or you will get bored.

So, ask yourself: What do you enjoy doing the most? What provides you with energy? What activities do you look forward to doing? What profession is best suited for your unique skills and abilities?

Speaking to a large crowd about an issue for which I have passion is the profession that best suits me. I look forward to every opportunity to inspire a group, and I enjoy watching the participants grasp a concept and become energized about the possibilities for improving their lives. I could do it all day long, seven days a week.

As you consider this question, keep in mind that it's okay if what you're passionate about is completely different than your current occupation. A meaningful journey rarely begins a few feet from the finish line.

QUESTION #4

HOW IS YOUR HEALTH?

Occasionally, when I look at myself in the mirror, I think it would be cool to look see a washboard stomach, chiseled biceps and broad shoulders. I quickly realize that I am six feet five inches tall, thin, and unlikely to ever have big muscles. I still work out five days per week because I realize that I can't enjoy my extraordinary life if I am not living a healthy lifestyle.

The reason this question concerning health is so important has nothing to do with how you look in a bathing suit; it lies in the fact that there is a direct connection between your well-being and your ability to achieve your goals. This connection has to do with the decisions you make each day. We tend to make better decisions when high energy levels and low stress levels

are prevalent in our daily lives. Exercise and a healthy diet lower stress and increase your energy level throughout the day, which helps you make better decisions and keeps you on the path to your extraordinary life.

The best way to envision a healthy lifestyle is to consider the following questions: What is your ideal weight and body fat composition? How often do you exercise? Do you compete in athletic events, such as marathons and triathlons? What are the characteristics of your diet?

QUESTION #5

HOW DO YOU GIVE BACK TO YOUR COMMUNITY?

Over the past seven years, I have worked with hundreds of clients and have witnessed some amazing professional achievements, but I have yet to have a client who felt satisfied without giving back to others. In addition, our Creator has insisted that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us.³

Unfortunately, in today's society, most people are focused exclusively on the accumulation of accolades, wealth, and material possessions. We tell ourselves that we will begin giving back when our finances are in order and our kids have graduated from college, but soon after reaching these milestones we have replaced our desire to give back to others with the desire for new possessions that we "need" to acquire.

It never ends. That's why I am convinced that your extraordinary life must include giving back to others and make it a priority. Ask yourself, "Who needs my help? How can my unique talents and skills make a difference in the life of someone who is less fortunate?" We will talk more about the importance of giving back in Chapter 5. Until then, I would encourage you to visit www.TheRule.org and learn a little bit more about our foundation that is committed to helping successful business professionals understand the importance of giving back.