

PART 1

Understanding the Mosaic Career

01

Introduction

It's about an eight- or nine-hour drive from Nashville to my parents' house in the northwest suburbs of Detroit, Michigan. I was driving alone, the open road stretching ahead, nothing but my thoughts to keep me company. It was the winter of 2012, and I had left early that morning, determined to make it to my brother's house in time for my mother's 70th birthday celebration.

I had taken plenty of long road trips in my life, but somehow, this one felt different. You see, I had just moved to Nashville a month earlier, embarking on an exciting new chapter with my friend-turned-business-partner, Brad. After a few years of working together in Los Angeles—navigating the turmoil of the Great Recession—we had decided to take a leap. Brad had started a digital marketing firm in 2010, and by 2011, he was ready for a fresh start in Nashville. I hesitated at first. My image of the city was filled with clichés—honky-tonk bars, cowboy boots, and country music.

Was I really ready for such a drastic cultural shift after the glitz and glamour of LA?

Then, I visited. And everything changed.

Nashville, or more specifically Cool Springs, wasn't the city I had imagined—it was vibrant, modern, and full of young, ambitious professionals. Nissan had moved its U.S. headquarters there. New businesses were thriving. There was energy, growth, and

Part 1 - Understanding the Mosaic Career

opportunity everywhere. My hesitation disappeared. I went from "hell no" to "hell yes" in a matter of days.

I had found my next step. Or so I thought.

A Sudden Detour

I should have been excited as I drove home that day. A new city. A new apartment. A fresh start. And of course, I was headed to a surprise party for my mom.

But my mind was elsewhere.

Because, despite just moving to Nashville, I was already leaving.

I had just received a surprise job offer to move to Mexico and launch an R&D office for HELLA, a German automotive supplier. It was a dream opportunity—something I had wanted for years. I knew it was the right move for me. But still, I couldn't shake the unease. How would I break the news to my family that evening?

Normally, I could explain my risky career moves with confidence. I had taken jobs overseas before. I had traveled extensively. But this time, it felt different.

I had just spent six months making the decision to move to Nashville. I had taken the time to think it through, make plans, and set myself up for success. Now, in just 48 hours, everything had changed.

I was about to change directions again—and I couldn't even fully explain why.

Would my family think I was crazy?

Maybe.

But deep down, I knew the truth: I had to do this.

Part 1 - Understanding the Mosaic Career

And in retrospect, it was one of the best decisions of my life.

The Career Path No One Told Me About

Moving to Mexico for three years turned out to be one of the most valuable experiences of my entire career. But at the time, I had no framework to explain why these non-traditional moves made sense.

Growing up, I was taught that career success meant picking a field, sticking with it, and climbing the ladder—one promotion at a time. That's what successful people did, right? At least, that's what I had been led to believe.

I had no blueprint for a career built on diverse experiences. No one told me that it was okay—even smart—to take risks, to pivot, to follow opportunities that didn't fit the traditional mold.

I didn't come from a wealthy background. I grew up middle class, off the same road in Detroit that Eminem famously rapped about in *8 Mile Road*. (For the record, I was no rap star.) Like everyone else, I went to college because that's what you were supposed to do. I took a job as a software engineer in the automotive industry because that's what engineering graduates from Detroit did.

But over time, I realized something:

Your first job doesn't have to define the rest of your career.

You can explore other interests, take different paths, and reinvent yourself along the way. No one told me that. No one gave me permission to step outside the traditional path.

But that's exactly what I did. And looking back, I wish I had a framework—something to make sense of my unconventional journey.

Part 1 - Understanding the Mosaic Career

That's why I wrote this book.

The Renaissance Man (or Woman): A Model for the Mosaic Career

The idea of a Mosaic Career isn't entirely new. It has roots in something much older—something that dates back to the Renaissance.

During this period, the world saw the rise of individuals who didn't limit themselves to a single discipline. They explored multiple fields, mastered diverse skills, and pushed the boundaries of human potential.

The most famous example? Leonardo da Vinci.

He wasn't just a painter—he was an engineer, scientist, theorist, architect, sculptor, botanist, and mathematician. He sketched prototypes of flying machines, studied human anatomy, and blended art with science in ways that were centuries ahead of his time.

Today, his modern peers would be individuals like Elon Musk, Oprah Winfrey, Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, Lady Gaga, Neil deGrasse Tyson, and Tim Ferriss—people who refuse to be confined to a single career path. They move between industries, disciplines, and passions, redefining success on their own terms.

But here's the important part:

You don't have to be famous to be a Renaissance Man (or Woman).

You just need curiosity. A willingness to learn, explore, and evolve. A mindset that says,

Part 1 - Understanding the Mosaic Career

"My career doesn't have to fit into a single box."

That's what a Mosaic Career is all about.

It's about collecting experiences, developing skills across different domains, and creating a career path that is uniquely yours.

And in today's world—where the traditional career ladder is collapsing—this mindset isn't just valuable.

It's necessary.

What Is a Mosaic Career?

mo·sa·ic /mō'zāik/ *noun* - a picture or pattern produced by arranging together small colored pieces of hard material, such as stone, tile, or glass.

The idea of a Mosaic Career is simple:

Just like a mosaic artwork is made up of small, colorful pieces of glass, tile, or stone, a career is built from a collection of experiences, skills, and connections. Some pieces are large and bold, shaping the overall design. Others are small and subtle, filling in the details.

Each choice, each opportunity, and even each setback contributes to the bigger picture.

Some pieces are deliberately placed—meticulously planned decisions. Others are added unexpectedly—influenced by chance, inspiration, or serendipity.

But together, they form a unique career story.

This is what I now call a Mosaic Career—a career path that isn't linear, but instead, dynamic, evolving, and uniquely yours.

A New Era of Work

For decades, we were told to follow the traditional career path:

1. Go to college
2. Get a job in your field
3. Climb the corporate ladder
4. Retire comfortably after 40 years

But that post-WWII career blueprint is obsolete. The Great Resignation, the rise of remote work, and the creator economy have changed everything.

We now live in a world where job security is an illusion, and career flexibility is the real power move.

When the pandemic forced people to work from home, something unexpected happened.

With no daily commutes and fewer workplace distractions, people started reevaluating their priorities.

Some started side gigs.

Some took mini-retirements.

Some switched careers entirely.

But everyone started thinking:

“What are the priorities in my life?”

“What do I really want from my career?”

That’s what this book is about.

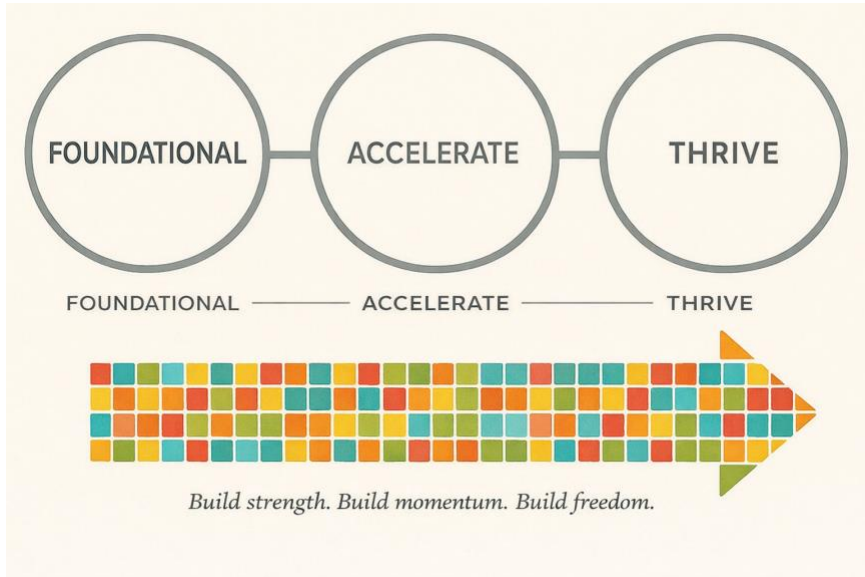
It’s about rethinking what a career can be. It’s about embracing a flexible, multi-faceted approach to work.

Part 1 - Understanding the Mosaic Career

It's about creating your own path, piece by piece.

It's about The Mosaic Career.

The Three Phases of a Mosaic Career



Conceptually, I'd like to introduce you to a simple framework that underpins everything in this book:

Foundational → **Accelerate** → **Thrive**

A Mosaic Career is not random. It evolves through stages — intentionally.

You don't stumble into a meaningful career.

You build it.

Phase I: Foundational

Part 1 - Understanding the Mosaic Career

First, you build your foundation.

This is where you develop real skills. Where you gain early experiences. Where you begin to understand how work actually functions. It's also where you start building relationships – the beginnings of a professional network that will compound over time.

This phase is not glamorous.

It is formative.

The quality of your foundation determines how high you can build.

We will explore this in depth in *Part 2: The Foundations of a Mosaic Career*.

Phase II: Accelerate

Second, you accelerate.

At this stage, you've gone deep in a few areas. You've tested interests. You've learned what drains you and what energizes you. You begin to see where your skills, passions, and market demand intersect.

Now you lean in.

You stack skills.

You expand your reach.

You take calculated risks.

You begin shaping opportunity rather than simply responding to it.

Momentum builds.

We will explore this further in *Part 3: Navigating the Mosaic Career*.

Part 1 - Understanding the Mosaic Career

Phase III: Thrive

Third, you learn to thrive.

This is where your earlier effort begins to compound.

You design your career more intentionally.

You define success on your own terms.

You build flexibility, resilience, and freedom into your path.

Thriving is not retirement.

It is alignment.

It is the ability to create meaningful work without sacrificing the rest of your life.

We will explore this more deeply in *Part 4: Living the Mosaic Career*.

These phases are not strictly linear.

You may revisit them multiple times throughout your life.

But understanding where you are — and what that phase requires of you — gives clarity to the journey.

Final Thoughts

This book isn't just about my story—it's about yours.

I'll share real-world strategies, case studies, and lessons learned to help you design a career that's resilient, adaptable, and uniquely fulfilling.

The world has changed.

It's time to build careers that change with it.

Let's get started.