

## Foreword by John Topping

*"This book is not a "self help book" of easy answers. There is no, "follow these eight steps to success" formula. It is much deeper. It offers you the intellectual foundation to understand the complex human condition we all share and how to harness this understanding to make meaningful changes in life."* John Topping

It was a little over two years ago that a mutual friend introduced me to Steven Kiefel. At the time, I had recently left Google after a successful six-year stint as a Senior Director with the company, capping off a 20-year technology media career in which most would define as successful. I steadily rose through the ranks to Senior level positions as high as "President," which afforded me the opportunity to work for one of the best technology companies in the world during an exciting time of growth. At my time at Google, I received recognition as a Top 5% performer among a company teaming with top performers. The experience culminated with a financial reward which ensured myself and my family a level of financial independence most would consider "living the American dream." Times were certainly good.

Despite outward success and following all the rules along the way to get there, I found myself in my mid-forties feeling a little out of control and in much need of a balance I was not exactly sure how to define. I found myself constantly asking the questions "is this it?" and "what do I really want out of the rest of my life?". After coming down from all the external high's of a 20 year ride to the top, it hit me that much suffered along the way, including most importantly time spent with family, friends and community which in my mind truly make a life important and meaningful. After a period of deep reflection, I decided to start up a business coaching consultancy working with early stage start-ups, something I was both passionate about and which would afford me a more balanced work/home life. It was during this time I was introduced to Steven Kiefel as someone I might be able to form a mutually beneficial relationship with, as he was starting up a new software company called RHC Software and, even more intriguing, had for years been teaching individuals and groups about the principles behind building a successful life, defined solely by the desires of the person living it.

We met for coffee to get to know each other better, and while the coffee was good, it was the conversation with Steven which was most stimulating. While I've had the opportunity to work with many smart and engaging people over the years, I quickly realized that Steven stood apart from the crowd in how "present" he was in our conversation and emotionally attuned to what I was feeling at any given moment. He was unique in his equal abilities to be left brain and right brain oriented throughout the conversation, an ability I had not seen before despite working with some of the best and brightest professionals in Silicon Valley over the past 20 years. My gut told me developing a relationship with this man would be of great help in my quest to continue defining what I wanted out of the rest of my life. My gut did not let me down.

I learned in our conversation that Steven had a long and fruitful career at NASA Ames,

where along with working with the managing of IT, he was involved with projects on "human factors," researching the human elements that make for success with individuals and within groups. He told me how he harnessed many of these ideas over the years into an eight week course called "Choose Your Destiny Now" and had also done a lot of writing on the subject matter he taught, helping individuals harness practical scientifically based insights on human behavior into methodologies they can use in their every day life to build more purposeful, fulfilling lives. It was obvious this effort was a passion and I was intrigued to learn that in addition to writing articles and giving courses he was applying many of these principles into his role as CEO of RHC Software. He suggested as a next step that I meet with some of his employees to get to know his company better and by doing so maybe come up with ways we might work together.

As I met employees of the company, I was amazed at how fully engaged and committed each and every person was to each other and the building of the company. Conversations with different employees, representing a wide array of ages, backgrounds and life experiences, would ultimately lead to them telling me how great Steven's "Choose Your Destiny Now" course and writings were and how they significantly changed the course of their lives and how they lead them day to day. My level of intrigue grew, and I set out to learn more about this man and what "Choose Your Destiny Now" was all about.

As I got to know Steven even better, I realized he truly seemed to have his finger on the pulse of human behavior and while I found his presence and our conversations always motivating, the information we discussed was always scientifically based and grounded in practical application as opposed to the rah, rah motivational seminars and books I had experienced over the years which were like candy going down but proved to deliver empty calories in terms of practical application. I realized the information he was sharing with others was truly different from the hordes of "self help" books, seminars and lectures available.

Despite my intrigue, I was somewhat reluctant at first to dedicate one hour a week for eight weeks to actually go through Steven's "Choose Your Destiny Now" course as well as read through the many articles Steven's employees were raving about. Like many, I had carefully honed the craft of procrastination over the years and seemed to find many reasons why I did not "have the time" to commit to learning about how I could control my own destiny (something I assumed I was equipped to do without any help). After gentle but persistent prodding, I finally relented to meet with Steven on a regular basis to learn more what "Choose Your Destiny Now" was all about by taking his course myself.

The eight weeks we spent together had a profound impact on how I've looked at the running of my life since. Every week, Steven would open my mind to the wonders of the human condition, illustrating through scientific research why humans behave the way they do and how by understanding the patterns of my own behavior I could move toward building a conscious "plan of action" to lead the best life possible, as defined by my own desires. Each meeting was the equivalent of a personal super energy boost, opening my mind to the ability I had within me to more proactively build a more rewarding life authored solely by me, throwing aside years of reactive conditioning built by paying to

much attention to the constricts of what “society” was telling me I should focus on.

When the eight weeks were done, I was a firm believer in the wisdom Steven shared through his "Choose Your Destiny Now" course and found myself wanting even more. Luckily, Steven also wrote a myriad of articles over the years on topics relevant to the human factors associated with living a more fruitful and rewarding life. During our time together, Steven and I quickly became friends and started a routine of occasional hikes to discuss life and brainstorm ideas on how to live even fuller and richer lives. During a beautiful hike in Point Reyes National Seashore, I told Steven that I read every article he had written and was amazed he had not yet written a book, so he could share the insights that had helped those who have taken his course and read his articles with the rest of the world. With a little prodding (and an offer to help him through the process) he agreed, which brings us to the book you hold in your hand.

This book is not a “self help book” of easy answers. There is no, “follow these eight steps to success” formula. It is much deeper than that. It offers you the intellectual foundation to understand the complex human condition we all share and how to harness this understanding to make meaningful changes in life, in an easy to understand and enjoyable discourse. It also offers you life planning methodologies which are simple but powerful which when deployed on a consistent basis start changing the course of your life in whatever direction you choose it to go. This is a book for all of us, regardless of age, economic status, gender or race. One of my biggest motivators in having Steven write this book was to share these insights with my 12 and 14-year-old sons so they too could harness the wisdom within it to start building a foundation for a successful and authentic life.

Take your time reading this book. Open your mind, and let the chapters sink in. Actively participate in the planning sections to carefully consider the life you want to start building from this day forward.

Enjoy yourself as you build the destiny you were meant to live.