

Escape *the* Cubicle

How to Leave your Corporate or
Government Job for Something Better



By Mark Anthony Germanos

Escape the Cubicle

How to leave your corporate or government job for something better

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Foreword

When you are considering leaving your job for the wild unknown of “self-employment,” the world can be a very lonely place. You don't know what you'll expect or how best to proceed. *Escape the Cubicle* is a great resource if you're considering the big leap. I wish I had had a guide like this when I made the jump!

When you decide to strike out on your own, there are lots of variables you think about like business licenses and taxes. Mark does a great job covering all the variables you probably never thought about. In addition to just the mechanics of moving from employee to self-employed, Mark integrates a “big picture” view of integrating your whole life with the work you love to create an even better life with a job you can keep forever (if you choose to), working for yourself.

Escape the Cubicle is a great combination of practical facts, experienced advice, and a desire to help people create a business that meshes with their personal goals. Most people never consider growing personally and professionally at the same time through self-employment. Mark shows you how to do just that and enjoy the process while you're at it.

Karl W. Palachuk

About the Author

Mark Anthony Germanos is a trusted adviser. He can help you run your business smarter, attract business by using social media and stay in business by keeping your computers and networks working.

Mark has been helping people use and understand computers since 1992. He started his first business in 1997 and admits that self-employment is not for wimps. He moved from Chicago to California in 2000 and restarted his business with a cell phone and a Honda Civic.

Mark is a 1989 graduate of Michigan State University. He is able to go into a business, talk with staff and within 10 minutes...tell you if the business is successful. He can also show you how to fix the bad habits and replace them with habits that successful companies embrace. His writings to date include *How to Make Computer Systems Work for you* and *Escape the Cubicle...how to leave your corporate or government job for something better*. Mark believes everybody should be self-employed, and anything else is a sacrifice of the soul. An active triathlete, he has a life, a dream wife and a dog.

Appreciation



We do not appreciate
our high school English teachers enough.
We realize this only after we graduate.

MAG

Chapter 1. **Let Your Light Shine**

Don't let anybody take it away.

I know a woman who worked at an architect's office. It was a strict environment and the owner ruled with meanness. Staff was unhappy. People complained constantly. The office had a negative energy, and even though this woman had significant seniority there, she was almost as unpleasant as the owner.

A few years later, I saw her at a local park. She and a coworker had started dating and launched a company training dogs for police departments. I recognized him immediately, since he also worked at the same architect's office. I didn't recognize her at first. She had a new glow and warm smile, and she radiated happy, youthful, and positive energy. I stared at her for 10 seconds before realizing this was the same woman from the architect's office. Shedding the negativity of the architect's office and going into business with her boyfriend had made her a beautiful, wonderful, and happy person. I told I didn't recognize her at first glance. Others told her she had changed 180 degrees.

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- Are you caught in a similar negative environment?
- Is your inner light being dimmed?
- Do you hate your job?
- Would you be happier **somewhere** else?
- Would you be happier doing **something** else?
- Do you expect to lose your job?
- Would you be happier if you were self-employed?

This book is for you. Did you find me or did I find you?
Regardless, you are here. Welcome to my view of the world.



Chapter 2. **Welcome**

In this chapter, you will learn:

- How Escape the Cubicle can help you
- How you are not alone
- How support structures are waiting to help you
- How Mastermind groups can be crucial to your success
- How to create a Mastermind group

I feel your pain. I will help you overcome fear of self-employment and also make smart decisions with your time, energy, and money. This is not the only book out there. Why did you grab this one? Did asking one of the previous questions prompt you? Did the title strike a chord within you?

Here you will find advice to help you:

- Build the foundation for self-employment
- Embrace social networking as a necessary activity
- Market your services with social networking
- Determine what tools you need to run your business
- Develop habits that will help you stay in business

I have also created a composite character, Daphne the Dancer. Daphne will launch her own business. You can follow along. Watch for “*Let’s return to Daphne...*” entries.

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I Was a Cubicle Dweller Too

My last cubicle-dwelling job was that of a webmaster at a downtown Chicago bank. We were the 36th largest financial institution in the United States at the time. We had a server room larger than a tennis court. Entering the server room and building \$90,000 servers was fun.

Times were good: I lived 26 floors above downtown Chicago. I paid off my student loans three years early. I took scuba diving vacations to Caribbean islands I could not find on the map. The paycheck was a sure thing. All I had to do was play the political games.

That was the tough part. The political climate was venomous; my boss's boss had a very open disagreement with his boss and was reassigned. This drama dragged on for months and was the primary topic of discussion at our staff meetings. I thought that I could not get myself fired. Instead, I feared my boss's boss would get his entire team fired. Looking back, I cannot recall why these bosses disagreed.

Maybe you have a similar culture at your cubicle job. Someone you have never met may read a report tomorrow and fire your team because it would be a good "business decision." Stockholders and money managers want profits. If that means firing people in the U.S. and hiring people in Malaysia for 1/6 the cost, most companies would do it. Your employer has to reduce staff; your name is on a short list.

Maybe you're already unemployed. Great! This is a blessing in disguise. You are free to read all the job-hunting and self-help books you can find. Tell the world you are free. Interview and network at will. There is no shame in being unemployed or self-employed. Make building your new career your primary activity. You are so free and fortunate. Rejoice.

Whatever the case may be, you're here. Welcome to *Escape the Cubicle*.

Find a Support System

You won't be the only self-employed person out there. In the United States, 9.3 million people are full-time self-employed.ⁱ Another one million do it on the side. People become self-employed for a variety of reasons. Perhaps you're tired of your current occupation. Perhaps you want to be your own boss. Perhaps you want more money for the same work. I am self-employed and life has never been better.

Find others who do what you want to do. I realize I am not the only computer network consultant in Sacramento, and that is why I meet with my peers every month. I am not the only author in Sacramento, so I meet with others every month. I am not the only self-employed person in Sacramento, and that is why I meet with others almost every week. For whatever profession you choose, you need to find others in the same line of work. View them as teammates. Remember that if you are offering a professional service and not a commodity, they are **not** your competitors.

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Four years ago, I found a group of computer network consultants that meets once a month in Sacramento. The organizers are very successful and volunteer their time to this group. They feel a need to help others in their profession make better decisions. They have nothing to gain. They give and they give and they give, and they expect nothing in return. I have presented various topics at this group's meetings. I do it for the same reason: to help my peers. We attend these meetings because we know we can share successes and also brutal lessons. By sharing brutal lessons, we can help others identify and avoid similar situations. You need a support system like this. It is a place to share knowledge with others in the same profession.

I also attend monthly meetings of authors and speakers in Sacramento. We have guest speakers who share advice on their niche. We invite members to present an issue to the group and then group members give the presenters advice. I consistently report that this group's meetings are the most nutritious meetings I attend. This group is growing by leaps and bounds—the hotel that rents us our meeting room has moved us to rooms that are larger than the previous month's room four months in a row. Although it's not as technical as my computer network consultant group, this group has high-energy meetings with very valuable content. When I first started attending, I said the members enjoyed a status I was pursuing. You need to find a group where the members enjoy a status *you are pursuing*.

I found another organization in early 2010. They meet once a week and share ideas to help its small-business-owner membership get through the week. I call this a support group for

“solopreneurs,” people who are self-employed and have no employees. Members volunteer their thoughts and present valuable information to the group. I have shared social networking strategies and SWOT analyses with the group. I am the only member of my chapter who is a computer network consultant. Other members have their own walks of life. We all, however, are self-employed. You should find a support group too.

The more you contribute the more you receive. I see people attend these meetings and say nothing. They sit in their chairs as if they were at home watching TV. Sometimes they take notes and sometimes they don't. I wonder what they gain by attending these meetings. I used to do that too, but that changed one day when I presented online backups and reasons why you should back up your data offsite. I discussed disasters such as the September 11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina, and the San Diego fires. I created a good presentation and earned more credibility from everyone attending. I've presented additional topics since then and find my stock consistently increasing. I made a higher time and energy commitment to the group, so I get more out of it. I'm sure you will see the same benefits.

Members provide professional services. Members are not selling commodities and therefore do not have competitors. You should find groups of small business owners you can view as teammates who also enjoy a status that you are pursuing. It is not easy out there. You need a support system.

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Here are some support systems:

- Almost every city, town, and village has a Chamber of Commerce. You can Google your town and the phrase “Chamber of Commerce.” I’m sure you will find one for your town or at least your area. You can attend mixers at no cost, but membership will have a price tag.
- Do you want success? Two of my friends launched an organization they call Successful Thinkers and have grown it by nourishing and spawning local chapters. I regularly attend the Cameron Park chapter and have given speeches at the Arden (Sacramento), Auburn, Cameron Park, El Dorado Hills, and Jackson chapters. I understand Successful Thinkers is growing outside California and has found recent success in Indianapolis. Successful Thinkers provides an environment where businesspeople can share ideas and meet other business owners. You can Google “Successful Thinkers” or search for them on Facebook. They may have a chapter near you. These meetings have no charge.
- Say hello to Rotary. Almost every community has a Rotary Club. Rotarians practice service over self by helping improve their communities. Rotary, International and its 1.2-million-member volunteer base work to combat hunger, improve health, and eradicate polio. My local Rotary Club includes the “movers and shakers” of the community. The folks whose names end up in the newspaper (for good reasons) are also active in the local Rotary. This is a very attractive place for networking.

Different Rotary Clubs have varying financial commitments, so visit www.rotary.org to learn more about the Rotary Club closest to you.

- You can find more networking groups at www.meetup.com or www.linkedin.com. I've found networking groups that cover almost every niche. You should determine your niche and then go looking for a group. Some are very specific—I've been invited to women's networking groups. I haven't attended for the obvious reason, but they may work for you.

Regardless, remember that you are not alone. Finding a support system will help you run your business better, meet high-quality people, and gain credibility.

Find or Create a Mastermind

Go one step further. You can find or create a group of small business owners who openly share valuable insights, whose members are successful in their fields, and where everybody feels they gain by participating in this group. These are called Masterminds.

The Mastermind was not my idea. Our great nation was formed by a Mastermind. John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and Richard Henry Lee became disgruntled with British rule and organized a Correspondence Committee “for the purpose of friendly cooperation for the Betterment of the Colonies of British America.”ⁱⁱ

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A Mastermind is a coordination of knowledge and effort, in a positive manner, to help achieve a definite purpose. A Mastermind has two characteristics:

- Economic. People want to make money and gain advice on how to do that. Napoleon Hill says most of history's richest men have utilized Masterminds.
- Psychic. When two or more people get together and think about something, they generate an energy that is greater than the sum of its parts. The solution is stronger than what the members could have thought of individually. Napoleon Hill says: "No two minds ever come together without thereby creating a third, invisible, intangible force which may be likened to a third mind." ⁱⁱⁱ I've seen this happen in good staff meetings and on successful sports teams. Perhaps you have witnessed this too.

Stack your Mastermind with valuable people. Consider your desired profession and find others in complementary professions. As a computer network consultant, if I were creating a Mastermind today, I would choose an accountant, realtor, insurance broker, lawyer, coach, and financial advisor who I already consider as friends. I'm sure each could contribute something valuable to the group. I know they would expect the same from me. Masterminds work when members share valuable time and information. They fail when members expect to receive without giving.

If you cannot find a Mastermind, create one. You can find attractive candidates at Chamber of Commerce events, Successful

Thinkers meetings, Rotary Clubs, and other networking organizations. Remember, the support systems you utilize will probably be the best sources to find attractive candidates. You can also review your list of vendors, business partners, and customers. Some of them may be thinking of a Mastermind group too.

For the entire digital version, see [Smashwords](#).

For the entire printed version, see [EscapetheCubicle](#).



ⁱ In December 2010. See the Agricultural and Nonagricultural data at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>

ⁱⁱ *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill, revised and expanded by Dr. Arthur R. Pell, Jeremy R. Tarcher/Penguin Group 2003, 2005, page 163.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill, revised and expanded by Dr. Arthur R. Pell, Jeremy R. Tarcher/Penguin Group 2003, 2005, pages 163 and 195.