

# Fan To Pro

## Unlocking Career Insights With Your Hobbies (SAMPLE)

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Introduction by Bonnie Walling

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**FAN TO PRO**  
**Unlocking Career Insights With Your Hobbies**  
**(SAMPLE)**

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This book is not completely comprehensive.. Some readers may wish to consult additional forms of information, some of which are provided in the Appendices of this book.

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First Edition (Sample)

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

There are many people without whom this book would have been impossible.

**Bonnie:** Who encouraged me those many times I commented that I wanted to do something to help people turn their hobbies into careers. Who encouraged me to write and speak. Without us working together there would have been no [www.fantopro.com](http://www.fantopro.com), and no book.

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**Everyone who ever told me to write a book:** You were right.

## **DEDICATION:**

This book is dedicated to everyone who knows the truth that we are happiest when we turn what we love into a career, and to all who help people realize that truth.

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## **The Fan To Pro Manifesto**

Our true interests and abilities can be determined by looking at what we are passionate about: the things we fan over, geek out over, our hobbies and fandoms.

Our careers are best directed by our true interests and abilities.

By examining our hobbies, interests, and pastimes we may gain insight into ourselves - our passions, our abilities, our knowledge, and our connections.

By applying what we learn about ourselves from our hobbies and interests, we may achieve more fulfilling careers and lives.

To not do this is to limit ourselves.

## Sample Introduction

Fan To Pro is a book that is a kind of mental toolkit for using your hobbies, fandoms, and interests into ways to improve – or define – your career.

In order to help you decide if this book is for you, this Sample will give you actual parts of the book so you can find out if it's what you need. Of course, I think it is, or I wouldn't have written it, but hey, I'm the author, I'm biased.

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If you want to reach the author, go to his personal web page at <http://www.stevensavage.com/>.

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## **Introduction: What This Is All About**

By Steven Savage

This book is about how your interests - your hobbies, your fandoms, what you geek over – give you a wealth of tools to improve your job, career, and business.

We spend a lot of time and money on our hobbies. We watch anime, play war games, discuss sports statistics, collect old albums, and buy the latest video games. We write fanfic, create websites, run conventions, travel long distances to attend sporting events. If you're passionate about your interests, you know very well how much time, money, and effort you'll put into them.

This time spent, this money spent, the efforts made: these help us grow as people and can help us grow as professionals. In our hobbies we gain skills and knowledge. We meet interesting people and go to interesting places. We achieve great things, whether from coaching a sports team to creating works of art. Our passions drive us to grow and achieve, and to seek new experiences.

Many of us look at the joy, the experience, the inspiration our hobbies bring us and ask “how can I do this as a career, how can I make what I love part of my job.” We want the meaning that comes with our hobbies to be part of what we do everyday to earn our keep, and to find a place in the world. “Why not,” we ask, “apply my fandom to work?”

Once that inspiration strikes, we are left with several hard questions that help kill that moment of wonderful “Why not.”

First, we don't always see the value of the things we do in “recreation” (which I put in quotes as people can work incredibly hard at their hobbies). Too often our hobbies, interests, fandoms, and geekery are looked down upon by others and ourselves. We're

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taught our hobbies silly, useless, or bad wastes of time (as opposed to good wastes of time). We too easily begin to believe our love of the anime, our knowledge of historical statistics, or our epic fanfics are useless endeavors. They're not "practical." They're not "real world."

Whether we see value in what we do or not, it is also a challenge to figure out how to apply our hobbies to our careers. What sounds like a great idea becomes harder to do when confronted with the simple question of "how do I do this." Where do you start turning what you love into a job or career?

The answer is to see fandom different.

Our hobbies and interests, and even our seemingly silly obsessions, are valuable tools. They tell us about ourselves. They give us opportunities. They help us grow. We pour ourselves into them, and come out different people – often better people. We just need to realize the potential that is there.

This book is about listening to what our hobbies and interests tell us about ourselves and what we can do. It's about realizing that our love of martial arts films tells us that we may love the work of being a director, or that our endless editing of a website for a convention shows that we have amazing writing skills. It's about realizing that the things you've done for years and decades tell you valuable things about yourself, and that you've already learned and gained a lot from your hobbies.

This book is also about how to understand your hobbies and interests and connect with them in different, deeper ways. It's about how to take them and grow as a person, as a professional. To find the opportunities you never knew were there for a better life. If you can spend hours watching sports, composing music, or posting to message boards, there's something driving you.

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It's about seeing, about listening, and about feeling in a deeper way about your hobbies – and applying what you find..

## Why I Wrote This Book

You know the person in every group people go to with questions about jobs and the economy? That's been me for a good chunk of my life. I enjoy and work on my career. I keep up on business and economic news. I keep tabs on job search trends. I was told by many a friend I'd end up in HR or recruiting or job coaching at some point.

Sure, I'd considered a career in recruiting and such, but the idea never really took off for me. If I had sat down and thought about it for awhile I probably would have decided to explore the possibilities of how I could help people with their careers. Instead, I had a more roundabout experience that woke me up to the idea that I could do more than occasionally advising friends.

I run a website at <http://www.seventhsanctum.com/> that is comprised of random tools for creativity - generating names for characters, equipment, spaceships, etc. This has been my hobby for quite a long time, and was a way to meet creative people, practice my programming, and have fun.

Seventh Sanctum regularly hosted contests after a friend made a suggestion to do so, and that quickly became a very fun part of the site . The contests also put me in contact with a lot of talented artists and online art communities, and I met many people with career ambitions in art – and many challenges they weren't sure they could face to make that career a reality.

The contests made me realize just how many people I had met in life who had said “I'd like to make **this** my job, but . . .” where **this** was their hobby and passion. I had seen a lot of them, even talked to or tried to help a lot of them. I soon realized how many people

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with ambition and talent there were in fandoms and various hobbyist groups who weren't sure how to take their loves and make them about their lives and careers.

I saw all these fans, all these geeks, who wanted to do something with their interests and weren't sure how.

I began wondering just how I could help people bring these skills and experiences from their fandoms and interests to bear in their lives as a whole. How could these artists become professionals? How could the casual musical genius compose? How could the budding writer be cultivated? It felt like all of those times I'd talked to friends about their careers, only now the whole world of fandom was my concern.

No, that didn't result in the book. Not directly. I'd like to say I had some great epiphany and the book sprang forth Minerva-like from my head, but it really wasn't that way. Actually I can't think of any great mythical metaphors, so let's stick with the story.

I began talking with a friend, Bonnie, about what we could do to help these potential "profans." We kicked around several book ideas, including interviews with successful fans-turned-professionals, but nothing really seemed to work out for us. The ideas didn't catch fire, and every time we got some handle on the idea, it didn't seem to be "right." Then again, neither of us had ever written a book, so we were all but tossing out ideas at random and hoping something stuck.

I started doing seminars at sci-fi and anime conventions,, leveraging what we'd discussed. Judging by attendance and the reactions I got, I noticed people were truly interested in the idea of what Bonnie and I christened "fan-to-pro". I knew we were on to something.

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Finally, it hit us that the obvious answer in the Internet age was to start a blog. A blog let us post news and information, post writing as needed, involve others, and gave us options to expand it over time. Admittedly I'm ashamed it took two geeks like us something like two years to finally realize a blog was the way to go, but at least we did.

From there it kept going. We started doing news, then more posts, podcasts, interviews, etc. It kept growing and expanding, organically - which was exactly what we needed. We met people at conventions, got more ideas, did more seminars, and kept steering it towards our goal as we learned more - our goal being showing people how to use their fannish interests professionally.

It changed our perspectives on fandom and people's hobbies as well. We saw more potential in people, saw people who were amazing role models, saw success stories. We also saw how people didn't use their skills, how they gave up on themselves, or how their interests could be killed not by cultural attitudes, but things like online infighting or lack of support.

With this experience and the bigger picture, I felt ready to write the book. I had honed my "guy everyone goes to for job advice" skills and knowledge, solidified my philosophy on the fan-to-pro-issue, and realized it really was time to **write**.

I have seen a lot of talent and brilliance expressed in hobbies, fandoms, and geekery. It's time it was appreciated, brought out, and given a chance to do more.

## **Who Am I?**

I suppose before we get to the rest of the book, it's time to earn my geek/fan credibility. Some of you are probably still wondering if my name is real (again, it is. And yes, I've heard all the jokes).

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I started being a geek early in life. I had two literate parents who taught me to read early, access to television (and PBS), and a supportive family. I read like crazy, and was often fascinated by science fiction, computers, and medicine. Many children wanted to be doctors – by the time I was in kindergarten, I could explain how the cells in the blood functioned by metaphors.

I was about nine when *Star Wars* came out, but I'd already been reading science fiction novels and science-fiction history when it did. I got into old SF fiction like Edgar Rice Burroughs and Edward Elmer Smith, which I think gave me an odd sense of perspective on science and science fiction - I had a sense of history about the whole thing, really. I dived into it, new and old. I was probably the only person in elementary school reading “Doc” Smith’s wonderfully overblown *Skylark* adventures, with Dick Seaton, a man who had a name goofier than my own.

I also got into video games early - I played Space Invaders and owned an Atari 2600. That quickly turned into an interest in computing, from taking classes in BASIC at a local university to proudly writing games on my Apple IIe in Junior High.

I was that much of a geek. I was hardcore.

All along during my geeky endeavors and fannish activities, it rarely crossed my mind that I would **not** use these interests in my career. I always figured I'd have a job in science, or with computers, or maybe even be a writer on the side. I did get a bit discouraged now and then, but mostly people didn't argue with me; if nothing else I at least had a career plan of some kind. It wasn't like they were going to dissuade me anyway, and in a few cases they probably weren't sure what I was talking about.

I did meander a bit career-wise as I got older. I took more of a science career (psychology), got tired of grad school, and went into the career world to see what I could do. Oddly enough, not

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knowing which way to take my career didn't kill my idea of doing a job that leveraged my hobbies and geekiness. Instead, I kept looking for ways to do what I liked.

This didn't always go well, but I kept on. I had to remind myself occasionally of what was important to me. This eventually led me back to my computer career,; with some retraining, I moved into Information Technology (IT). I knew it that life would just not be as worth it if I could not do what I enjoyed, what I cared about, with the people that shared my interests.

IT is, of course is a hugely geeky/fannish place, where people obsess over cool technology, leverage spreadsheets to crunch fantasy football numbers, and more. I was in my element in IT. I started my IT work in 1995 and haven't looked back since.

I worked my way through consulting, working for various companies, became a Project Manager, and worked in cool areas such as webcasting and video game middleware. My obsessions, my hobbies, my interests - they all paid off in a more interesting life (and a good paycheck).

I have leveraged my geekiness, my hobbies, and my fandoms all of my life. I've really never thought much about not doing it.

I'm not alone. Lots of people have done this. My goal is to share my experiences, and those of others I've met, gained over the years to help people out. To all those fans, geeks, sports addicts, music nuts, and more who have the love and the skills, they just need a change of perspective and a boost to go use what they're so damn good at.

## **OK, Let's Go**

You know what this book is, why it exists, and why I did it. You tolerated my jawing, so let's get practical.

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We'll do a quick intermission, and then let's talk about YOU - the geek, the fangirl, the fanboy, the sports nut with the bobbleheads, the history buff.

We're going to talk why you, the fan, are so great.

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## **Chapter 1: The Power of Fandom**

It doesn't matter what kind of fan you are - this is about you. I don't care if you love anime, Role-Playing Games, epic fantasy, a particular sports team, or a genre of music. I don't care if you love one of those things or all of them at once (though if you do love them all at once, I seriously want to learn your time management skills). You're a fan - short, as we all know, for fanatic.

To me a fan is defined by two things:

- 1) There are one or more hobbies/interests they are passionate about, and this is a notable part of their lives.
- 2) This passion is something they spend time indulging in and doing things related to - playing games, writing fanfiction, making websites, etc.

Just "liking" something is one thing. Making things, doing things, and participating in communities related to your interest is what makes you a serious fan. It makes you part of the "fandom" of your interests, the world of the fans and their efforts.

Being a fan, I want to let you know how awesome you are. Really. Look, this is the pep talk part of the book, so sit down, keep reading, and let me tell you how great you are. Every book on life and careers needs a pep talk section, so let's get on with it and give you an ego boost. We'll get to the hard stuff later.

If you're going to apply what you love into a career, you're going to need to appreciate yourself.

### **Why Fanboys, Fangirls, Geeks, Otaku, and more are great**

I'm a classification-oriented person, so I've broken down just why

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you are so great into a group of handy categories. Think of it as a way to organize remembering what makes you special as a fan.

Once you realize this, you can start applying it to other parts of your life.

### ***Passion***

Fans are passionate and involved, even to the point of obsession. They will read books over and over, watch games whose players are long-retired, find obscure music from a band's early days. They care passionately about their chosen subject matter. It's part of their identity - and part of expressing who they are and what they care about.

It's easy to question the usefulness of fanning. What do those hours spent watching TV do? What do those DVD collections mean? Why, for the love of all that's holy, did they spend time writing a multipart epic fanfic where the Beatles are vampire hunters in an alternate magical universe (I haven't seen this, but you have to admit that would be pretty cool to read)

I don't see uselessness. I see potential: A mirror held up to a person's self, if you will. I see people worked up and into something, active and engaged, deeply in love and deeply committed. It takes something special to love the terribly incompetent sports team you root for, to follow an author's works for years, to love the trivia of what you geek over. I see a power in this passion, a great potential waiting to be tapped - or perhaps tapped in different ways.

Fandom teaches you that you can love something. Fandom teaches you that things get you worked up - and what they are. In those moments you feel down or distracted or lifeless, fandom can be that spark that reminds you that you can and do care about something.

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Fandom tells you that you can truly love something – and reminds you what you love.

Remember this. We'll be coming back to it over and over again.

### ***Creative And Productive***

Fans are creative people. It's part of their passion really. They are driven to create and to express that passion. Involved in a book series, the history of a given country, the love of a technology - that passion finds outlets in amazing ways.

Fans make things - websites, fanfiction, conventions. They build, bring forth, and just plain **do**. An hour on the internet will yield you fanart, fanfic, convention listings, information pages, custom wikis and more. A life among fans and geeks, such as my own, will leave you with the unavoidable conclusion that fans can be incredibly productive.

Yes, some of what fans produce may not be good. Some of it may just be plain bad. The art may not be professional, the writing may be awful, or the website may be a bit ugly. This doesn't matter - in some cases it's admirable, the fan's passion and desire to create driving them on even when skills are lacking or crude. Fans can hammer away at their costume designing, grow a tiny convention into a monstrosity, improving as they go.

Fans make things. In fact, you probably have a lot of work to your name because of your interests, you just may not appreciate it or even realize it.

### ***Involved***

Fans are involved. Geeks get into things. Otaku run conventions. Sports fans go to games.

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Fandom does not sit on the sidelines and watch, or just produce works for no one. Fandom **does**. Fandom holds get-togethers. Fandom builds communities. Fandom means long late-night discussions online. Fans are active, connected, and interact with each other, with the things they love. They're involved.

Just sitting around liking something isn't fandom. Being **involved** – that's fandom

### ***Persistent***

Fans persist. They love something deep enough that they'll be around after the movie is over, the team has been renamed, or the band has broken up. They are the memory of what was cared about, its maintenance, and even its revival.

Fans also will produce new work once the old one is forgotten by all else. A trip online will find music videos made of TV series you never heard of. Entire virtual series of TV shows long gone are created and published for free reading. Zines old and new record the history of ideas and inspiration from long before the internet was available to share information.

Fans persist long after others have given up. They endure.

### **Conclusion**

Fans are not just people who "like" stuff. Fans are people with blazing passion. Fans are people who do create and express themselves, even beyond their limits. Fans are involved with their works, with each other, with what they love. Fans don't forget. You're a fan? This is you - passionate, creative, involved, and persistent. You have the ability to care, the ability to make, the ability to get connected and you keep at it.

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You're more amazing than you realize - and I'm not just saying that because you bought this book (Though I appreciate that as well).

### **So, what's next?**

OK, you got your pep talk. If you don't buy that, as a fan, you are a person possessed of passion, creativity, and the mantle of history, go back and keep reading this chapter over. This is who you are.

So, we've looked at why fans are cool. So how do you become a professional fan, a progeek; someone using what they love and obsess over in their life and career?

Before we get to that, let's turn it around. Let's ask just why people **don't** use their fandom on the job - what stops them?

After all if fans are so great - why exactly do we meet so many people not doing what they love?

Let's look at what's been sabotaging you, your friends, and your fellow fans.

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## **Chapter 3: Find Your Fandom Edges**

So we've talked about why fans have advantages and why they don't have the jobs they want. Since you now (hopefully) have some appreciation of yourself and your hobbies, and you have at least a few disturbing ideas of why your career isn't where you want to go, let's take a look at finding your strengths.

Fandom gives us what I've nicknamed "Fandom Edges" – specific advantages that being involved in fandom gives you that are not found, as a whole, in other activities. I'm not talking the advantages from merely liking something. I'm talking the edges of the entire fannish lifestyle, the involved, engaged lifestyle that comes from attending obscure ballgames and running conventions and making costumes of your favorite anime characters.

If you're a real, involved fan, you have Fandom Edges.

I've broken the Edges into four different categories for ease of classification, and throughout the book I'll be referring back to them. Let me note that this classification system is a bit arbitrary, but I find it useful as a basic tool for organizing your ideas about what benefits your fandom involvement gives you.

Let's take a look at what special advantages you, as a fan have. This is the first part to being aware of what your hobbies can help you achieve.

### **The Fandom Edges**

#### ***Passion***

We've already discussed the passion fans have (and that you doubtlessly are aware of as you probably have it), but it bears repeating.

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Fandom is about passion, deep involvement and interest in **something**. Something triggers your interest, calls to you, draws you out - from epic wargames spanning ten hour game sessions to a particular brand of music to a style of animation.

Passion lets you know, in your most depressed moments, that **something** gets you riled up and going. Passion tells you what you care about and connect with.

Passion also is something you can channel and use. If you've ever seen a sports memorabilia collector turn their living room into a mini-museum, if you've ever watched a friend spend two years writing epic fanfic, you've seen a lot of energy and involvement. This can also be channeled to improve your life, drive your career, etc.

Passion is the Edge of both powerful involvement and self-discovery. It can tell you what you care about doing, and drive you forward even in the darkest moments.

### ***Experience***

Fandom lets you experience and do things you never would have otherwise, or would have under different situations (say, those without the above Edge of Passion). Your HTML skills today came from making a fan web page; your writing skills are developed by doing fanfic or reviews; your math skills were given a boost those times you crunched numbers to determine the best way to play in your favorite MMO.

Fandom grants you experience, letting you gain and improve skills, learn abilities, and in general improve yourself. There are fans whose hobbies are practically businesses: organizing conventions as complex as any software company's latest launch, running websites for years celebrating a specific band, etc.

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Experience is the Edge of gaining and learning abilities, and learning what you're capable of. In your career, it means you have skills, and enough awareness of them to leverage in your job or for your own business.

### ***Access***

If you're a fan, you have access to a lot of resources a non-fan won't. A non-fan, the non-geeky are likely to not even know such resources exist - but you do.

You meet people at conventions you'd never meet otherwise. You access knowledge and information with web sites and books that non-fans have never heard of. You'll travel to places you'd never go otherwise to hunt down that one particular antique or see that famous author. Your knowledge of esoteric comics lore will let you make friends with interesting people, from fans to writers of scholarly works on pop culture.

If fandom embodies passion and gives you experiences that testify to who you are and change you, it also gives you the Edge of Access to many unusual and useful resources and people. Being a fan gives you a chance to connect with people, events, and resources others don't know of or aren't interested in. These resources can be used in your career.

### ***Knowledge***

All that your passion drives you to, all the things you learn in your experiences, all the interesting information you have access to as a fan – all that results in Knowledge.

As a fan, many things – your personal growth, the people you meet, the events you attend – will grant you a unique understanding of the world and other knowledge many people won't have. You understand the history of soap operas where most

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people won't. You understand just how video games are produced from concept to sales. You understand how globalization changed the action figure collecting market.

I like to think of Knowledge as the counterpart of Experience. Experience lets people grow their skills and abilities, Knowledge is knowing about things such as history or industries.

Thus, the final edge is Knowledge - the Edge of all the things you've learned about the world, processes, professions, and what you love. You understand and know of many things - leverage them in your profession, for your business, and on your job.

## **Fandom Gives you a PEAK**

Together, Passion, Experience, Access, and Knowledge spell PEAK. This is a handy guide for remembering the Edges so you can use the idea to analyze your fandom experiences - what shows your passion, what grants you experience, etc. - in understanding how to apply fandom to your career.

This handy mnemonic is also deeply symbolic of the fact that . . . it's the best mnemonic I could come up with when I was writing this (the runner up was the even less dignified POKE). Yes, these cute little codes are often obnoxious and overdone in self-help literature and motivational speaking, but they are useful tools.

Let's face it – you are going to remember PEAK.

Thus there are four basic Fandom Edges that your unique way of geeking out grants you. These are things that are unique to you (and in some ways to similar fellow fans), and they're to be appreciated as things that truly do give you an edge. What you get worked up over and what you know are unique to you. People without your fannish experience won't have the same Edges you do.

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Realizing you have these advantages is the start of applying your hobbies to your careers. When you can identify your loves, your abilities, your unique resources, and your knowledge, you can then ask “how can I apply these in my career?”

You have all of this going for you – you just need to see it.

So now that we've identified the Edges, we're going to put them to action by looking at specific areas fandom helps you in your career.

But first, some exercises. Go on, take a few minutes - it's worth it.

**Exercise 3-1:**

Pick one of your fandoms, take four pieces of paper, and label them Passion, Experience, Access, and Knowledge.

Now, write on each paper what Passions, Experience, Access, Knowledge that your chosen fandom gives you **or** shows you. Your love of old films may show your Passion for history (or for Rudolph Valentino). Your work with an art museum gave you the Experience of improving cataloging skills. The last convention you attended was (or could have been) Access to a great networking event. Your love of anime gave you unexpected Knowledge of international trade when a deal to publish a title you love fell through.

When done, if you want, pick another fandom and try this again. See what you learn about yourself - and start getting into the habit of looking for your Fandom Edges.

**Exercise 3-2:**

Pick one specific fandom activity you engage in - fanfic writing, attending ball games, etc. List the PEAK areas that activity gives you.

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**Exercise 3-3:**

Pick a fandom - but pick one you're **not** in. Take four pieces of paper, and label them Passion, Experience, Access, and Knowledge.

Now think about that fandom and ask yourself how it may fire people's passions, how it may grant them experience, what access to resources it gives them, and what knowledge they gain. Be fair and keep it in a positive light.

Look this over when done and see if you've gained any insights.

**Moving on: Specific Areas**

Now that you've got a handy tool for looking at your fandom - and finding edges fandom gives you in your life and career - the rest of the book is going to be specific things fandom grants you to improve yourself and your career.

Keep looking for those PEAKs. I'll be calling out useful ones throughout the rest of the book.

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## Chapter 8: Get Informed

Fandom gives you exposure to a huge amount of information. Release dates of movies or books tell you about those industries. The history of baseball reflects much of the history of America. You learn about actor's careers, the technology of games, the copyright issues involved in publishing, all without stepping outside your hobby.

I'd go as far as to say fandom is what happens when you combine information with socialization. You've not only met a lot of people, but you're probably retained a massive amount of information. Now, all of that may not exactly be useful, but you'd probably be surprised.

Fandom lets you learn a lot, often without much conscious effort because you're having fun doing it. You probably have an incredible amount of knowledge in your head gained in fandom. This knowledge can be put to use in your career. If you want to be in art, the knowledge you gained hanging out with anime fans can help you. If you want to write computer games, your obsessive following of game news has probably given you a good idea of what studios you want to work for.

Going beyond this, fandom also gives you incredible opportunities to learn. You read websites, hear news, and talk to individuals with a lot to share once you realize it. All these source of information are, in most cases, fun for you to use as well - making the process of learning faster, less onerous, and more interesting.

(Of f course I get excited about supposedly boring subjects like economics, proof everyone's idea of 'fun' varies.).

In short, fandom gives you a huge amount of resources that can teach you more about your career, your industry, and your business goals. You just have to leverage it.

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So let's take a look at how you can leverage fandom to learn about career-relevant information - or find out what you already know but didn't appreciate.

## **Learning About Careers**

It seems to be an article of faith among people that the things you love (fandom, hobbies, etc.) are great guides to where you want to work, what you want to do, and so on.

Unfortunately, as mentioned in the myth of the "must-do" jobs I find a lot of ideas expressed about use-your-hobby-as-job tend to be rather restrictive and, at times, degrading. It's too easy to stereotype people and their hobbies as having only certain career "appropriate" career paths available – and that if you can't make it on one of those paths, just give up and do something "practical"

Though fandom is a great way to learn about things you can do with your life, it is incredibly easy to be distracted by the "must-do" jobs, as well as "must-work-for" companies.. If anything, the biggest limit we face in turning what we love into what we do is thinking too narrowly.

What it comes down to is this - you have something you love. You have things you like to do that involve the things you love, from video games to music history. You meet a lot of people doing these activities who can provide insight. You gain a lot of knowledge about how given careers and jobs work - or how they can.

You just have to think broadly.

Once you step outside the "must-do" myths (if you aren't already outside of them) you can see many ways fandom gives you ways to learn about career options:

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- You can meet individuals who embody careers you'd like or may like (more on this later).
- You get to know how given industries, businesses, and professions operate and you can examine the career options in them. When you hear, perhaps, that a foreign film you're waiting for had a legal issue with international distribution, you just learned a bit about law. When a complex medical issue limits one of your favorite golf players, you just learned a bit more about medicine - and recovery.
- You can hear about career options that you wouldn't hear of elsewhere merely by having access to more information, activities, professionals, and people. The fans you talk to, the things you hear of when someone discusses putting out a film, the discussions at 3 AM after a big game, can tell you a lot. Listen to see what's out there.

Fandom also has ways to teach you about careers:

- You see the direct results of efforts and not distant portrayals. When you see a new anime, you can appreciate how it came together. When you read a novel, you probably have a better idea of the marketing campaign involved in selling it. When you listen to a new song, you probably know far more about how the musician behind it got it done.
- You can attend seminars and panels at conventions and events to learn from people about what you're interested in.
- You encounter people who, as noted above, may give you career ideas you didn't think of. When you accidentally meet the publicist for a new band, or when you get a chance to talk to a guy that covers legal issues for video games, you have a chance to learn a lot you never expected.

Fandom is a research tool you've probably been using for years, and can use even more. You're immersed in a world created and supported by various talented people, and that can give you new ideas, and appreciate of your skills.

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The important thing is to keep your eyes and ears open to see options and opportunities. Avoid the "must-do" myth and take a second look at everything going on.

**Exercise 8-1:**

Make a list of careers that you've become interested in from your fandom experience. Feel free to add the ones that you're thinking of due to brainstorming (you have done the previous exercises, right?). Do any of them surprise or intrigue you? Is there anything you've missed in previous exercises?

**Exercise 8-2:**

Take one career from Exercise 8-1, and like other exercises, write down every career you can think of that's related to or supports that career. Keep going until you've exhausted your imagination. Do any of these careers interest you?

**Exercise 8-3:**

Take at least 2 careers from Exercises 8-1 and 8-2 and research them. A trip to the library or some surfing the internet is enough. Get a general idea if you'd like to do these careers and how you'd approach them.

**Exercise 8-4:**

In any of the careers above, how could you use your fandom to learn more about them? Could you attend a specific convention, talk to fellow fans, etc.?

**Find Role Models**

Let me lay it on the line: role models are vital to learning.

Role models provide someone to emulate. They provide an inspiring story. Their lives can give us timelines for success. They give us that visceral, human understanding that we too can be like

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them.

We humans learn best from, well, other humans. Role models are vital. It's up to you to seek them out intentionally. Don't expect them to fall into your lap; go find them.

A good role model doesn't necessary have to be doing what you want to do, or be someone who's your best friend. They just need to be someone to can relate to, learn from, and emulate to some extent.

Fandom itself is absolutely filled with possible role models. There are famous actors and writers and programmers you can learn from. There are the people who've coached amateur sports for a decade with patience and wisdom. There's the music mixing masters who are somewhere between wizards, technophiles, and artists. There's the illustrator who drew your favorite manga. There's the convention head who keeps running a 15,000-person convention without losing their marbles.

These are people you can learn from. Best of all, you have something in common with them from mutual interests and involvement - in short fandom itself.

So take a look at fandom and see what role models you can find. Look to the stars and to the people writing fanfic and everyone in between. When you find someone that reaches you, learn from them:

- Study up on them. Find out about their history, their achievements, training, etc. Some famous and successful people have written books or do blogs that can be very educational.
- Find out what they've done and how they did it.
- Learn from their mistakes and successes - each mistake they make is one you may not have to suffer through.

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- Talk to them.

The latter often throws people . Yes, it's best to talk to your role models. It's hard, scary, even difficult, but you're ultimately better off talking to them somehow. I've had the fortune to learn from several people because I simply sat down, found their email, and contacted them.

How do you talk to your role models? Without being annoying, clinging, submissive, or dysfunctional? Talk to them like anyone else. Be civil, intelligent, and focused. Here's what I advise:

- Have a set of questions for them **up front**. Be sure you know what you want to ask.
- Find a non-invasive way to contact them. I prefer email, but also a polite conversation at a convention, a call to an agent, etc. is good.
- Be politely persistent in trying to get a hold of them, but take no for an answer.
- Be sure to say thank you.
- Try contacting more than one potential role model.
- Don't differentiate your behavior among people - be as polite to the person you know who is an inventory system programmer as you are a famous game designer. Putting people on pedestals **or** beneath them doesn't work.

I find people who are famous, or big names in their industry are often are willing to talk to people. I have a habit of writing people who write books that impress me and am pleased to say many are glad to respond. They are, after all, people just like you and me – which is why they're so valuable to learn from.

If you find you get along with your role models, keep cultivating relationships. You never know how it can grow. Some day you may be able to help them.

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**Exercise 8-5:**

List all of your role models, alive and dead, famous and obscure, etc. For each one, ask yourself for each how you chose them and why.

**Exercise 8-6:**

Of your living role models, pick 3 you haven't contacted. Find out how you can contact them and work at it until at least one respond to you.

**Exercise 8-7:**

In your fandom, what opportunities do you have to meet role models from your list or otherwise? Write down the ways.

**Exercise 8-8:**

Are you a good role model? Why or why not? How can you be one for other fans?

**Learn About Industries**

To me, almost everything is an "industry" – industry defined here as a group or area of activities that is distinctly identifiable, and achieves certain things. Anime is an industry. Publishing is an industry. Sports is an industry. Making shoes is an industry. Education is an industry.

Yes, I'm using the term industry as broadly as possible.

Fandom puts you smack in the middle of a lot of industries - sports, comics, music, publishing, history documentaries, etc. If you're in fandom you're a fan of something, and that something is made by someone, distributed by someone, supported by someone, etc.

Being in fandom means you have a chance to learn about an industry or industries, and those that support it. This lets you

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understand where you might want to work, from company to position to location. You learn how industries themselves work as you see the results of what they produce, from the release schedule of your favorite books or video games, to the pre-game event at a football game.

For your career, knowledge of an industry is going to be vital. Industries have rules, cultures, ways in and out, geographic limits and advantages, etc. Being in fandom, you have a chance to learn what people "on the outside" may not.

Ways to leverage your fandom experience to learn about industries:

- You'll easily hear about how an industry or industries are doing - and estimate or hear about job opportunities. If your favorite game studio is doing well, you may guess they'll be hiring new programmers and testers. If your favorite writer's last two television deals fell through, then you may want to think a little broader since it could mean shifts in the industry.
- You can find out easily where an industry is based and understand good places to move, where to send resumes, etc.
- You can assess impacts on that industry easier as you're "in the know." You'll hear about strikes, legal suits and the like.. It may show up as Message Board gossip or Twitter posts, but you'll know.
- You'll have some knowledge so you can extrapolate the future; at least, no worse than anyone else.
- Your fandom involvements pretty much ensure you'll keep getting information about the industries you're interested in.

You've probably learned more than you expected anyway, so put it to use!

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**Exercise 8-9:**

List all the industries that directly involve your fandoms. Do any of those interest you? What have you already learned about them from your hobbies?

**Exercise 8-10:**

List all the industries that support or impact your fandom (Anime DVD's need to be burned, bands need transportation, etc.). Do any of these areas interest you? What have you already learned about them from your hobbies?

**Exercise 8-11:**

Pick one industry you've learned about and/or are interested in. See what fandom experiences have taught you about them, and then do research on that industry. Find five companies you'd like to work for and come up with at least one business you can start. How much of the knowledge you've leveraged comes from your fandom?

## **Learn About The Economy**

This book was written in the middle of an economic downturn. If you, the reader, are experiencing a better economic state than I saw in 2009-2010, please keep reading anyway. Also, I'm glad for you.

We're all affected by the economy. We're affected by prices and hiring, changes, bailouts, crises, surpluses, and the like. If you want to function in the economy, in a job, in your career, you need to keep up with economic issues.

Unfortunately, learning economics can be both boring (as it can sound uninteresting), and frustrating (as it's overwhelming). Sure some of us get into economics, but a lot of us just shake our heads at the tedium, confusion, and lame fad theories. Then of course there's me who gets into this stuff.

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Your fandom is a gateway to understanding economics without going numb in the process. Just as everything is affected by - and affects - economies, it's the same with the things in your fandom. Sports teams lose stadiums, television shows get canceled, comics get made into movies with the hope of big bucks, etc.

In fact, it's likely you already have some knowledge of economics and economic occurrences because of your fandom. You may just not realize it. The visceral impact you've felt when your favorite anime stopped getting translated or when your favorite old comic series got revived, or when your most beloved band stopped making enough money – all those tell you things about the economy. You have direct, emotional understanding of economic issues.

You just didn't realize how much you know.

I spent years working in Information Technology, from consulting to video games. I loved anime, science fiction, and of course, video games. As I was directing my career, I began to realize just how much I was learning from my hobbies. Changes in technology impacted not just my job, but the websites I visited. Graphics packages let television shows I watched get made faster and cheaper than in the years previously. Issues of shipping and speed of delivery affected the anime industry. Nowadays, a simple small investment by one company may herald the development of a revolutionary new video game.

Take a moment to look at what you can learn about economics from your fandom. You know a lot more than you may think, and it can direct you to new research and findings.

**Exercise 8-12:**

Ask yourself what economic trends you've seen in your fandom-companies doing good or bad, individuals doing good or bad, etc.

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What did you learn and what does this tell you about industries you'd like to work in?

**Exercise 8-13:**

Where do you get the information in exercise #12? Can the resources you used teach you more about the economy?

**Exercise 8-14:**

Pick one "incident" in the last 6 months, related to the economy, that affected a business, actor, industry, etc. you have a fannish interest in. Spend at least 1 hour researching it to learn more in general. Try to find out how it affected you.

**PEAK REVIEW: Gaining knowledge related to your career**

*Fandom is an opportunity to learn a great deal about many subjects.*

**PASSION:** Your passion helps you take interest in subjects that may otherwise be missed - or be boring. It can also spur you to learn more, if it hasn't already.

**EXPERIENCES:** You have gained a lot of information and understanding in your fandom activities. At worst you may not appreciate it. You may also have gained research and analytical insights.

**ACCESS:** You have access to role models, information, and resources to learn more.

**KNOWLEDGE:** You've learned a lot in your fannish activities about how the world works, how industries work, and what you'd like to do.

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