

“For those of you who might not know me, I’m the author and my name is James Reed and it’s my great pleasure to welcome you all here this morning to the official launch of ‘Life’s Work’, our new book. I say ‘our’ because it’s a collective effort and many of you, in fact all of you here this morning have helped in some way or another, so thank you for that.

Now at the weekend I asked my son Patrick, who’s at the back there, “Are you going to come to my book launch?” He said, “I might Dad, I might.” He said, “I’ve got a question.” I said, “Well, what’s your question?” He said, “Do you live to work, or work to live?” You might have been asked that question in the past. I said, “That’s a good question, Pat.” I said, “Working is living.” That was my reply. Working is living. And because you only live once it’s really, really important to find work you will enjoy and be good at. And then I said that’s what this book is all about, and that’s why we’ve written this book, it is to help people think about what they really enjoy and think about how they are going to fast track their careers in ways that will be great for them, and for you. So that’s the purpose of this book.

It’s the third book in a trilogy, which I rather grandly call my career trilogy. The first book is about how to do your CV, and a CV, I like to say to people, is a life-changing document. How often do you write a life-changing document? Not that often, I’d say, so it’s worth buying the book and thinking about it. The second book is about interviews, and interviews, I say to people, are life-changing conversations. How often do you have a life-changing conversation? So it’s worth buying the book and thinking about it. And the third book, this one, in the series is about one’s career, future. I am just calling that a life-changing read. So I hope that will compel people to use it.

What I have observed in my career is that there is a lot of luck involved in life and in work. A lot of luck is involved. And these 12 proven ways that are in this book are ideas that I have picked up along the road that work, that will increase your luck a little bit. And if someone was to say to you, “Would you like to be a little bit more lucky?”, what would you say? I know what I would say. Yes. And what I have tried to do is put 12 proven ways to fast track your career into 60 ultimately golden career nuggets that are in this book that will help people be a little more lucky in their life and in their work. So it’s taken a few years to put this together, I mean it was based originally on a talk I gave to students called ‘How to get your career off to a flying start’. And it’s based on a lot of conversations I’ve had with colleagues, with clients, with friends over a huge – well, really a lifetime in business.

And I was thinking this morning on the way in about one conversation I had with a friend of mine who’s called Mladen Petreski and he’s a Croatian football agent. How would I know a Croatian football agent? Well, our wives were childhood friends. Mladen and I found ourselves sitting in a square in the Maltese island of Gozo a couple of summers ago, and to help you visualise it, imagine a sort of scene from a spaghetti western. A sort of baking hot day, a couple of abandoned bars, no one around, a church chiming. And Mladen, he looked at me and he said, “Are you here because you chose to be, or because life brought you here?” I said, “That’s a good question, Mladen,” and it’s a question I have been asking myself ever since because it’s so true in so many ways. Now it’s a question about this morning, are we here because we chose to be here or because life brought us here?

And I was thinking about this, when we had written the book and it had been sent to the publishers, it was time to think about well, how are we going to launch and promote it? What are we going to do for a book launch? So I asked for suggestions, and one suggestion came back that we should do a game of pooh sticks on Hammersmith Bridge. Maybe in January it might be a bit cold. And then I thought maybe we could ask our publishers if we could get a room at the publishers, and unfortunately, they didn’t have a space that was available for this sort of occasion. And then I was

told that the Conduit Club is really good, why don't we get a room there? And I asked how much it would cost to get a room at the Conduit Club, and it was £2,000 for an hour and a half. I thought that's quite a lot of money. And then I thought, well we've got this new kitchen refurbishment here at Reed Online. And then I asked if we want to give people vegan rolls and bacon rolls - can we get a cook in to make those? And I was told that would cost £2,000. So I thought, well we had better think again. And then somebody had the brilliant idea of talking to El Panino across the road there and they said they could do 60 vegan and bacon rolls for 120 quid so my business brain thought that might be a solution. So the bad news guys is you're not having a £50 breakfast in a £50 venue, the good news is that we're not on Hammersmith Bridge right now playing pooh sticks. And the money that we've saved is going back to you because on your way out there's a goody bag for each of you. In that bag there is a complimentary copy of the book and a special edition of 'Jimmy Reed's Honey Whiskey', kindly supplied by the Beeble business that my wife Nicola runs, and a little bowl of Love Mondays sweets. So I thought that was a better way of investing the money than on the Conduit Club or a chef, and I hope you'll agree.

A couple of small anecdotes to share: there are 12 proven ways in the book, one of them is to find a boss that you can learn from in your career. And in my early career, a little story, when I was 23 years old I was working in an advertising agency just around the corner from here called Saatchi & Saatchi in Charlotte Street in London and it was my second sort of serious job, and my job was as 'media planner buyer' for the agency, which meant I had to buy advertising campaigns for clients, bizarrely like Head & Shoulders shampoo, which you wouldn't imagine now. And Club 18-30 holidays and student railcards, and things like that. The big campaign I had been given to do with my team was the Eurotunnel. Most of you are too young to remember a time when Britain was not connected to the continent by a railway, but this was that time when I was 23 and our job was to put out an advertising campaign to persuade the public to invest huge sums of money, investing in digging a tunnel from England to France to put a train through. And Saatchi & Saatchi got this contract - we put a huge effort into winning the bid. They made an amazing ad where they flew a helicopter really low from London to Paris, 100ft off the ground on a bright sunny day, with a front camera, with the concept "One day it will be possible to travel to France like this", as if you were on the front of a train. It was a minute long, most ads are 30 seconds. And we invested a huge amount of money in this campaign which was going to kick off at midday on a Friday in February or something. And it being the mid '80s it was normal to go out for a boozy celebratory lunch on occasions like this. And it was also normal to leave the office junior (me) behind in the office because someone had to answer the phone, because there were no mobile phones in the 1980s. So once this campaign had been launched, my colleagues went off for a big lunch somewhere in Soho and left me in the office.

And about 15 minutes after they had all gone, the phone rang, and I picked it up and answered it in a formal way. And this guy just said, 'It's Phil from the fourth floor.' And anyone who worked in this building knew that the fourth floor was where the Saatchi brothers lived and worked - and the legal team obviously - and you didn't go to the fourth floor unless you couldn't help it. And he said, "It's Phil from the fourth floor and you've got to pull the campaign." I said, "What do you mean I've got to pull the campaign?" He said, "You've got to ring every television station, pull the ad straight away and tell them we're not paying them." I said, "Are you sure? Why?" I thought I had better find out why! He said, "The Eurotunnel is being debated in parliament this afternoon and it's illegal to try to unduly influence parliament." So that was the law. So I put the phone down, and I had this awful thought - is it Phil from the fourth floor? I had no idea who Phil from the fourth floor was. And I thought, is it one of my mates pulling my leg? Then I thought, no, I had better do what Phil from the fourth floor said. So I rang, not just ITV, it was like 12 different TV stations - London Weekend,

Thames TV, Granada, Central Television, Anglia, Ulster, Scottish - it went on and on. I had to ring all these people up and tell them we're pulling the campaign, pull it now, it's breaking the law and we're not paying for it. I got so much abuse. One after the other from these calls. I said, "Well don't worry, we'll make it up for you. We will try and give you some Head & Shoulders ads or something." I got so much abuse from each of these calls. And after about an hour of this I was sort of hammered. When my colleagues eventually reappeared, they came in a bit pink faced from their big lunch. And they said, "Oh, did anything happen?" I said, "Yeah, I pulled the campaign." If the abbreviation WTF had been around then it was what was across their faces. And all hell broke loose. And what I remember about this is - I got employee of the month after this, they did that in those days - but what I remember about this was the incredible learning experience (not one I had hoped for or expected) from early in my career about negotiation. Because in fact all those TV companies remained friendly and we were able to do successful campaigns thereafter. And I feel proud now, looking back, before the word Brexit was invented, that I played a little part in building the Eurotunnel. So, I like to travel to France on the train! So that's one story, one of the proven ways is 'Find a boss that you can learn from'.

Another, and this is the only other one I will mention, and it seems appropriate now because it's January, is kickstart some good habits and kick out some bad ones. And it's funny, isn't it, how in your working life there are some days like the one I've just described and some people that really stand out. And this is another occasion a bit later in my career when I was 40 years old, I'd heard about a man that we had placed into a job in Doncaster in Yorkshire working on the railways through Reed in Partnership. And this man had been a convicted gangster, armed robber and he had been in jail for 20 years and he had come out and we had got him a job on the railways working on a night shift, repairing and maintaining the railways. And there was a lot of debate at the time about whether unemployment caused crime or not and was unemployment connected to crime. I was interested to meet this man and ask him a few questions. So, I learnt that his name was Dave and I got on the train and went up to Doncaster to meet Dave for a cup of coffee. And I had never had a cup of coffee with an armed gangster before, so I got there quite early and I don't know if it was because I was educated by people who served in the war but I knew that you always had to sit at the back of the café with the wall behind you so that nobody could sneak up on you, you could see who was coming in. So I sat there waiting for him. I will never forget when this man arrived - he was huge, I mean much bigger than me, sort of 6 ft 6 and shaven headed. And as he came in the door he sort of cast a long shadow over the café, literally, the sun was behind him. And I was, I will quite happily admit, afraid. And he came down, he sat with me, and you know what, he was the most quietly spoken, charismatic person I have probably ever met. He was really interesting to talk to and I asked Dave a few questions. And he said to me that he had been in crime for most of his life, and for some parts it had paid. He'd had a Porsche at one point, he had made lots of money at certain points. But he had been consistently caught and he had spent 20 years in jail - this is a man aged 40. So half of his life in jail.

I said to him, "So we've got you a job on the railways?" and he said, "Yes," and I said, "How did that come about?" And he said that the day he was offered a job by Reed in Partnership, he'd been offered another job by some of his old criminal associates which was to do a heist, a bank raid, and be the getaway driver. And so I said, "So what made you decide to take our job?" And he said, "That job you found for me, has changed everything, because every time the doorbell rings now, I don't have to worry whether it's the police coming to take me back to jail, and I love my job working nights on the railways." And I said to him, "Well, so how do you find working nights, Dave?" And he looked at me as if I was daft and he said, "Well I've always worked nights!" But you know what, it's interesting because Dave ended up going back to prison, but not as a prisoner. He went back to

prison to talk to the young men about why they shouldn't make the mistakes he had made and how they would be happier in their life if they did not. How they should change their habits. And he was also promoted and he became the leader of this work team on the railway. And I found him and that conversation very memorable and very inspiring because it struck me that if Dave could change his habits, we all can. And he is a standout for me in that respect.

So those are two themes, find a good boss you can learn from and kickstart some good habits and kick out some bad ones. There are 10 more. I don't know why I am pointing at a cake, get a book. There are 10 more in the book. Not many people have read the book, there have been a couple of reviews which I modestly put on my blog, one from The Bookbag which said 5 stars and they liked it and one which meant the world to me from my Dad. And we all have parents and you sort of want to impress your Dad, don't you, even when you are little and sometimes you still do when you are large. And I gave him the book after he left after Christmas as a sort of parting gift. I didn't want him to comment on it over the holiday in case he didn't like it. Anyway, I got an email two days later saying he read it in one sitting, and he had only done that once before in his 85 years so I thought that was the ultimate compliment. So thank you to him for that.

And I would like to say a few more thank yous. Particularly Nick and Huss from El Panino who provided the breakfast at such a bargain price, I would like to thank them. My publisher Tom, who's here – for taking the book on and being incredibly engaged and supportive of the project. I would like to thank Robert Smith, agent, who has always been encouraging another literary project. So thank you Robert for that. And I would like to thank the team that worked on it: Ginny, Molly, Imogen and Laura – I can't see you all but I know you are all in here somewhere. I would like to thank my wonderful wife Nicola who is at the back, to whom the book is dedicated for her love, support and inspiration. And I would really love to thank all of you in our Reed and extended Reed family for all the ideas and contributions that you have made and for coming along this morning to launch the book officially. So thank you very much.”