

How I honed my hobby into a handsome hustle

Isn't it strange how our most real

Next content - Shivam, my colleague, who makes the same money my salary -
Value of time - if you do it well

How in the world did I change my career in an entirely different niche?

*I begin my life to give it an end,
'Coz I am a candle who has only light to send*

These were the first two lines of the sonnet I wrote in sixth grade, which was selected as the best one in the school.

However, I was the top student of the class already.

Which also meant digging out all the seeds of all my creative sides, and focusing on the careers that came with an assured vending machine of money.

So I didn't nurture my writing anymore.
However, it never stopped nurturing me.

Four years later, in tenth grade, I topped the entire country in English writing exams – a feat I did not even know I was on.

However, now was the time to get “serious” in life.
Thus I opted for accounting, economics and business studies as my majors in 11th grade.

And forgot about writing.

Little did I know that the third time it would come to me when I least expected it to. And shake me up forever.

It was seven years later.
The year was 2014.

I was 23, single, and ready to mingle with a career path I was certainly not in love with.

I had been devoting my days to preparing for the most difficult exam in India: Chartered Accountancy (equivalent of US CPA) course.

During which I happened to discover a beautiful love for reading and writing books while I wanted to make a full-career in writing.

I used to read Robin Sharma, Norman Vincent Peale, Napoleon Hill, Rhonda Byrne, Tim Ferris, and all the beautiful works of these thought leaders to keep myself motivated, to allow me to get through the ordeal of going through the exams.

However, when they did let me navigate the unknown waters smoothly, like a good teacher does, they also presented to me the truth that the path I was on was not the path I was meant to be on.

But it was too late already.

I had been preparing for this course for five years already.

Just a few more months, and I would finally have a lottery ticket.

Lottery ticket to the money I had long been waiting for.

Lottery ticket to living my life on my own terms.

Lottery ticket to being the kid to my parents who would make them proud.

While I was certain of money that was about to come, I was not at all certain about my soul if it would get a chance to get nurtured in the process.

I would be “successful” in the eyes of the world. However, would I really be happy?

Truth be told, I was also scared.

Because I was not aware if writing as a career was even possible.

Do writers make as much money as Chartered Accountants?

Is it really possible for someone to share their written thoughts and make a living?

Perhaps the answer to these questions was a big “yes”. Or a small “no”.

I wouldn't know unless I figured to know.

However, what I knew for sure was writing as a career was an unconventional choice, something which my parents won't be the most supportive of, of letting me pick.

So, I went ahead with picking the job of an Internal Auditor of a private bank, once I became a Chartered Accountant.

The job was all that one could possibly desire in a “good” job:

- Travelling 15 days of the month
- Living in fancy hotels where you sprung up the moment you jumped on the mattress
- Room service, of course
- Getting to click Insta-worthy pics and telling a lie to the world “Look at me and be envious. Because I am (appearing to be) happy.”
- Meeting new people (who perhaps hated their job as much as I hated mine)
- Position and power (who knew it was fake, because I was giving away the power of my soul)
- Respect and recognition (which goes away the moment fake power goes away, leaving you striving more for real and recognisable work)

But there was an emptiness lingering in the corner of my heart somewhere, that only grew bigger as I continued chasing these external things instead of attending to myself.

When I told my interest to be a writer to my manager, he suggested that I continue to work on the current job, while making time for writing gigs on the weekends.

I did try that out for three-and-a-half years. Did not work out. I was always tired. Or travelling. Or both.

I finally quit my first job, because along with emptiness, my manager had moved out, and my team leader had been replaced.

The undesirable events made my desire even a lot easier.

The day I resigned, I called up my father and cried.

I did not know what the future held.

The sad thing was I had never created a pool of savings for myself.

Within 3 months of being jobless and not being able to “crack” something, I went into another job.

Just the same of its kind.

With two differences:

- I had actively started saving money
- I had started picking up freelance gigs on the side since Day 1 of this new job

And just like that, when the team leader in this new job as well moved, they wanted me to move out of the team. So I did!

This time, while making 50% of my income already through freelance gigs.

And a LOT more confidence and savings.

It was during my second job, that I had also picked up an internship as a Content Writer with an influencer.

A year into that internship and multiple retainer and one-time freelance assignments later, I got a job offer to lead his team, as a full-time Content Manager.

Fast-forward to today, I am still in that job.

Challenging myself daily.

Getting to write on my dream projects.

Getting to experiment unknown waters.

Getting to ghost-write their national bestsellers.

All of this, while leading a content team of ten people and managing operations of the journey.

It just could not get better.

Did I face any difficulties?

- As I look back, it was the easiest thing I went through. The difficult part was to continue pouting at the world with an upward curve of my lips when in reality it was pointing downwards.

- Surprisingly, my parents supported me mentally and emotionally, throughout. They would have loved for me to stick to financial security. However, when I did make the plunge, their support was the most important thing I needed back then. And it did come to me without asking.

Anyone who looks at my journey may believe that I landed up at the right place at the right time. That I got lucky. Perhaps I did.

However, I also created that luck, by:

- Writing my blog (<100 words) every single day since 2015. Sometimes in the cafeteria of my office.
- I have written two books that did not do well at all. They did not cross even 100 sales each. Of course, I am equally responsible for not marketing it correctly. However, what I did get from them was the resilience to stick with a writing project, the power of research, the ability to put my thoughts to words, the grit to do my work because I was watching, and most importantly, the preparatory ground for me to eventually ghost-write bestsellers.

As I look back to a “secure” life that I am in my career, while continuing to push my limits here, here is what life has taught me so far:

1. There is no right time.
Right time is when you know your desire to not show up to your work is more than the desire to get through it.
2. You have to be ready before it is time.
When I was in my second job because I ran out of savings to support me in my freelancing, I knew I had to start freelancing right away, in order to build credibility as well as finances. It was difficult to navigate along with the job, but it certainly did make the navigation easier, once I was out of it.
3. Financial security is important
The cliché of “smiling in your broken car” is more important than “crying in your Mercedes”, however, that holds true when you have gotten yourself to a place of getting your basic needs met.

For all those who are confused and envious of those who have their lives and careers sorted, here are my parting words for you:

Life is not “sorted” for anyone. Not even for the distant acquaintance who is posing with a mischievous grin in their Instagram stories from Hawaii while holding their white wine.

However, when you are in the middle of a struggle and wanting to keep afloat, it always helps to ask yourself time and again: Is this the struggle I am willing to sign up for, or is this the struggle I am waiting to sign off from?

Most certainly, you will have your answer.

The right struggle will make it hard to be hard, and the wrong one will only make you wonder why it is so hard.