



Are you steering or in steerage?

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Upgrade: Taking your Work and Life from Ordinary to Extraordinary by Rana Florida McGraw-Hill 2013 review and author interview by Donald Officer and Kelly Okamura

Part 1: The Review

Although *Upgrade* is written in a readable, conversational style, author Rana Florida is pretty hard headed in what she prescribes for any individual seeking an upgraded life. She is also on record as a strong believer in creativity – Get Creative is one of her seven commandments and she is CEO of the Creative Class Group which embodies her husband, Richard Florida’s well known innovative ideas about economic growth. She is, moreover, a regular Huffington Post columnist. Consequently, the disciplined regime advocated in this book might seem at odds with the out of the box ideas the author espouses elsewhere.

Perhaps qualifying as a member of the creative class does not tick off all the boxes on the independent artist application (presuming it exists and artists agree to complete it). It’s also just possible there are other ways to climb the ladder or to achieve happiness that don’t involve grit, perseverance and discipline. However, the no nonsense success prescription jumping from the pages of *Upgrade* offers very solid advice backed by positive psychology and anecdotal support from an impressive list of well-known interviewees noted for either performance excellence or impressive innovation.

Nor does Rana Florida casually drop or reference her star calibre names. Instead she consistently takes their stories to action points sharing the most important takeaways with her readers. Here are the key headers illustrating the *Upgrade* code:

1. Envision your future – it’s never too late to start living your upgraded life
2. What’s your passion? Or find someone else’s passion and join in
3. Get creative – embrace change and innovate
4. Design your time – only 3 things needed to manage your most valued resource – have fun, be productive, and give back
5. The power of we – collaborate with others
6. Big risks – big rewards
7. Fail to Succeed.

We'd be remiss if we overlooked Rana's concise summary of visioning in the first chapter. To upgrade properly, conduct a first class scrutiny of what it's going to take and how driven you are to get there. Although celebrity chef, Mario Batali calls *Upgrade* a manifesto for success, it's not a playbook for everyone – after all, there are only so many seats in first class. Kelly once got bumped to first-class on a transatlantic flight, but found the oversize seats too uncomfortably big for her britches.

However, if you want to lead a beautiful people life and love working with laser focus on your career, *Upgrade* offers critical nuggets to correct your more mediocre bearings. Remember to stay mindful that your journey takes place in an imperfect, unjust world and look out for kids or burdensome friends, they tend to mess up the best laid plans.

See Part 2: The Interview tomorrow