

"The" "CAREER" "Itch"

4 STEPS *for*
TAKING CONTROL
of **WHAT YOU DO NEXT**

Grace Owen



This book is dedicated to my father,

Thompson Benjamin Coleman

1933–2004

og publishing

A division of Grace Owen Solutions Ltd

PO Box 56791, London E11 9BP

Copyright © Grace Owen 2009

Grace Owen has asserted her moral right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-9563908-0-6

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the publisher.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition, including this condition, being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Editorial Team: Jacqueline Burns, Leda Sammarco and Jane Collinson
Design and illustration © Julia Lloyd Photography by Jake Green
Printed in the UK by MPG Biddles Ltd

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1



Mixed Sources

Product group from well-managed
forests, controlled sources and
recycled wood or fiber
www.fsc.org Cert no. IT-COC-002303
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

**10% of proceeds from the sale of this book
will go to support AIDS orphans in Africa**

CONTENTS

	<i>Acknowledgements</i>	5
	<i>Introduction</i>	7
	<i>The Career Itch</i>	19
STEP 1	I is for IDENTITY <i>Knowing who you are</i>	32
STEP 2	T is for THINKING <i>Clarifying what you do next</i>	74
STEP 3	C is for CHANGE <i>Making a successful transition</i>	104
STEP 4	H is for HABIT <i>Achieving a balanced lifestyle</i>	138
	<i>Finally...</i>	170
	<i>Must-have resources</i>	173
	<i>About the author</i>	175

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my husband Simon, for his love, honesty and patience. To my son Ben for the news updates and hugs. To my sister Rev Dr Kate Coleman, for keeping me focused. To Rose Coleman, another sister, for IT support and childminding... where would I have found the time without you?! To Maame Coleman, yet another sister, and Rev Cham Kaur Mann for your constant encouragement and curiosity throughout the 'birthing' of this book.

Thanks to Sue and Brian Owen for their suggestions and excellent proofreading skills. To Victoria McMillan and Claire Ward for their time and 'fresh' pairs of eyes! Thanks to the Owen family for their ongoing interest.

To my support team (mum, Rev Alison Mackay, Becky Salmon-Craig, Emma Sawyerr, Fiona Beckford, Joyce Strong, Lynda Bickley, Pastor Sandra Thomas and Sara Kruger) for their enthusiasm, calls and emails.

Thanks to my past employers who gave me a story to tell. To my clients and fellow Career Itch-ers, who have shared the highs and lows of their career journey with me. To Kate Bradley at HarperCollins who first saw potential in

this book and got my foot in the publishing door.

To Sue Blake for getting me started and the editorial team Jacqueline Burns, Leda Sammarco and Jane Collinson for their incredible patience in helping me to shape the finer details. To Roan Media and Moore VA for taking me into the 'big wide world'. To Julia Lloyd for her fabulous cover designs... I will have to write more books to use them all! Thanks to Biddles for a great print job and Duncan Beal at York Publishing Services for sharing your expertise and car!

To readers of *The Career Itch*, I have written this book to be a source of practical inspiration. May it be just what you are looking for...enjoy!

INTRODUCTION

"There are no rules you can follow, you have to go by instinct and be brave" Unknown

MY STORY...

It was Millennium Eve, a few minutes to midnight and I could feel the crowd getting more excited as they started to jostle and shout. I was on a rooftop at London Bridge waiting for the fireworks to start, when the inner restlessness about my career returned. What did this feeling mean? Was it something to do with having turned 30 the year before? Maybe it was the global excitement about entering a new century that was unsettling me? I couldn't put my finger on the growing ache but as Big Ben struck midnight, I vowed that I wouldn't feel like this on the eve of 2001.

I named the inner restlessness that I felt that evening *The Career Itch*. This was because it described the mixture of feelings that I had about my future career, including confusion, frustration, hope and curiosity. It led me down a path of self discovery that enabled me to take control of what I did next. *The Career Itch* is what led me ultimately to become a career coach, speaker and author.

My career has taken a variety of twists and turns. I started out on the Marks and Spencer graduate management trainee programme. After completing it successfully, I worked as a human resources (HR) practitioner in stores overseeing a wide range of areas from staffing to payroll and performance management to employee welfare. I moved to the Marks and Spencer head office in central London, having decided to specialise in Learning and Development, which is one of the many branches of HR. This branch closely reflected my growing passion for equipping people to excel at work, and was a natural progression into the field of career development and change, which is now my area of expertise.

Soon after my experience on Millennium Eve I resigned from Marks and Spencer to commence an eight-month career break and figure out what to do next. On the eve of 2001, the inner restlessness had subsided and I felt content. The following January I took a temporary job, as a senior HR project manager at Whitbread, which became permanent. A year later I was approached to head up the learning and development team at Costa Coffee.

When *The Career Itch* returned three years later, I resigned from Costa Coffee to retrain and expand my skills in coaching, which I had come to love. I started a business that same year working as a freelance trainer, coach and consultant. Since then I have grown a diverse portfolio of work that has taken me into the public, private, voluntary and charity sectors. Developing this career smorgasbord has been exciting, challenging and enlightening.

During my professional life, I've met hundreds of

people at different stages of their career. Few are contented; most are looking for a sense of purpose and direction. Others are planning their next move in order to do something meaningful or earn more money. I have had conversations with students, professionals and managers, leaders of teams and working mums, entrepreneurs, undergraduates, postgraduates and people nearing retirement. From the shop floor to the boardroom I have listened to their stories, recognised their dilemmas, celebrated their successes and empathised with their difficulties.

After hearing so many people struggle with *The Career Itch* I finally decided to write this book, and hope that it will guide you through your feelings and take you where you want to go.

Whether you consider your career a series of jobs or a vocation, *The Career Itch* is an inner wake-up call and a trigger to take control of what you do next. It draws your attention to something that is just around the corner or coming over the horizon of your working life. We will look at *The Career Itch* in more depth later on.

Having told you my story, I would like to find out more about what is happening in your career right now. I wonder what has led you to pick up this book and what has brought you to where you are today.

YOUR CAREER SITUATION

Take this short self assessment and circle one letter in each category that best represents what is going on for you currently.

- 1** How do you spend a typical workday?
- a) Working all hours God sends
 - b) Doing just enough to get things done
 - c) I am not working right now
 - d) Thinking about what I'd like to do next

- 2** What best describes how you feel about your career?
- a) Running on empty
 - b) Going through the motions
 - c) Out of the loop
 - d) Uncertain about my next move

- 3** What are your thoughts on a Monday morning?
- a) I can't go on like this much longer
 - b) I feel stuck
 - c) I'd like to return to work of some kind
 - d) I'm ready to move on to something new

- 4** What are you most likely to do in the evenings?
- a) More work
 - b) Forget about work and chill out
 - c) Deal with personal or family concerns
 - d) Surf the internet looking for jobs

5

How would you advise your best friends if they were in your position?

- a) Tell them to take a holiday
- b) Suggest that they focus on the positive aspects of their work
- c) Find ways to boost their confidence
- d) Encourage them to consider all their options

6

What do you feel you need most right now?

- a) Rest
- b) Momentum
- c) Perspective
- d) Direction

7

What do you want most from your career in the next 12 months?

- a) To have improved my work-life balance
- b) Feel that I have moved forward
- c) The flexibility to juggle personal interests or family matters
- d) A new opportunity or a bigger challenge in my present work

Interpreting your responses

There are four situations that are likely to reflect your career right now:

- Mostly a** = **Burnt out**
- Mostly b** = **In a rut**
- Mostly c** = **Taking a break**
- Mostly d** = **At a crossroads**

Have a look over the page to read more about your career situation and what you can do about it.