



Get Lucky: How to Put Planned Serendipity to Work For You and Your Business

Thor Muller, Lane Becker

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As the pace of change accelerates and the volume of information explodes, we're under great pressure to connect just in time with the people and ideas we need to thrive. But we can no longer plan our way to success—there will always be factors beyond our control. This uncertainty, however, cultivates one of today's key drivers of success: serendipity. More than blind luck, serendipity can produce quantifiable results: breakthrough ideas, relationships that matter, effortless cooperation, synchronized market timing, and more. Get Lucky shows businesses how to succeed by fostering the conditions for serendipity to occur early and often.

- Distills planned serendipity into eight key elements: preparedness, motion, activation, attraction, connection, commitment, porosity, and divergence
- Features stories of serendipity in action at well-known companies including Avon, Target, Steelcase, Google, Facebook, Walmart, and more
- Written by serial entrepreneurs and cofounders of Get Satisfaction, a breakout platform for online customer service communities with over 65,000 clients

Planned serendipity is not an abstract, magical notion, but a practical skill. Get Lucky is the indispensable resource for anyone who wants to learn this skill and to make serendipity work for them.

Get Lucky: How to Put Planned Serendipity to Work For You and Your Business Details

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From Reader Review Get Lucky: How to Put Planned Serendipity to Work For You and Your Business for online ebook

Amy says

Valuable, useful AND entertaining!

Jim George says

Fairly interesting take on an unexplored science of a lucky mind, coupled with a sort of unseen cosmic ability. To quote the author; unless you expect the unexpected you will never find the truth, for it is hard to discover and hard to attain. Use planned serendipity - creativity, interacting with chance- use uncertainty to your advantage. It is often an unexpected event that provides the spark that leads to the next stretch. There is more that is unknown than known; we must by necessity remain open to discovery, to surprise. Embrace the unknown, and trust that you will find what you need when you need it.

Kat says

This book is from the guys behind Get Satisfaction and the Future of Work project. It is really about a new way of working and collaborating. They focus on how to intentionally structure serendipity into the work environment with some great examples of companies who have done this and had happier, more innovative teams. It is an excellent read.

McKinley says

Luck - motivated, instinctual, accidental discovery and passion
so good luck is hard work
planned serendipity includes 8 skills:
motion (action),
preparation (link unconnected stuff),
divergence (explore alternatives),
commitment (focus),
activation (stay on task),
connection (optimize),
permeability (adapt),
and attraction (draw best to self)

Chapters discuss each in more detail. I didn't like the layout so much and felt all the examples and stories for each skill were too much, just add quantity and not quality.

Chris Conrey says

Loved it - great match up of how the world really does allow you to plan your serendipity and make your own luck

Santanu says

I wanted to read this book because it was from the founders of Get Satisfaction. I have earlier read books on similar topics e.g. Groundswell on the topic of how it can help enterprises to get online, get social. I was interested in more.

This book disappointed me.

The random collection of anecdotal case studies /stories chosen for this book is interesting but no way demonstrate the point author attempts to make. Some mix of insights and analysis are presented throughout the book - that has minimal or no relationship with the central idea of this book.

The case studies by themselves are very interesting - but the attempt to draw a morale that is hardly logical irritates me.

I would not recommend such a waste of time.

Smartowl09 says

- * Actionable Suggestions, Obvious Feedback and Clues
- * sugru - interesting discovery
- * Brightworks

Emily says

I loved this book. I read it in two sittings and underlined constantly, making notes of ideas that I had while reading. What I found most valuable about this book was that it presented its concepts from both the point-of-view of an established company needing to grow, change and shift and from the point-of-view of a startup in planning for building a business that allows for serendipity. I am currently sitting squarely in the middle of both situations, so I could see how to apply the ideas to each business.

Get Lucky is organized into chapters around eight skills that “will contribute to making your life luckier:”

Motion
Preparation
Divergence
Commitment
Activation
Connection
Permeability
Attraction

While it may seem that these eight skills might contradict each other, Becker and Muller did a good job of addressing these contradictions and showing how they each balance and complement each other.

One of my favorite parts of the book was when they gave a definition of a “geek:”

A geek is someone who has “an obsessive curiosity in an area of knowledge that causes them to forget themselves...Geeks are people that pursue their interests not because it’s their job, but because they are compelled by an irresistible force. They simply can’t get it out of their minds.”

I think I like this because I am a self-proclaimed geek.

My only complaint. One of my pet peeves with business books is that the same case studies are used over and over again. When Get Lucky started in on the organization of the Pixar offices and then 3M case study, I did an eye roll, but pressed on. I am glad I did. These were the only two case studies in the book that I had already read in many other business books. There were many, many other examples in this book that were worthwhile and intriguing.

Roberta says

The first part of the book was very good and the last part was so-so. Overall the book is good and the authors provide a good step-by-step guide which includes:

- Motion
- Preparation
- Divergence
- Commitment
- Activation
- Connection
- Permeability
- Attraction

Each Chapter is introduced via a famous quote Chapter 2 Motion: *“Life is about moving, it's about change. And when things stop doing that, they're dead.”* - Twyla Tharp

The authors provided good examples of businesses and individuals for each of chapter, everyone from CERN to Phil Jackson to Sugru.

Mike Maurer says

I have a stack of business books that I've had around for quite awhile. This was on top & first of my effort to glean anything useful.

For me, I didn't get much out of it. The stories are interesting, though I know most of them. I know Pixar's story, I know how AWS came out of Amazon, same with how 3M does things, etc. For others, the stories may be new and open their eyes to new possibilities.

Also, the book seems geared either to big organizations or startups. A bit hard to tell as the authors bounce around a lot. I wanted to get something out of it as a business owner, not a VC backed startup. The Motion part I got, but the rest didn't seem to stick. But as I said, that is me and others may get more insight out of it.

Mark M says

From the founders of Get Satisfaction, a quick read here that will inspire you to incorporate the startup culture in your business, no matter how large or small. Key takeaways: use feedback loops throughout your business and make it easy for customers and employees to shape your business.

Full disclosure: I received this book as a professional courtesy, and I have been a Get Satisfaction customer for years.

Paul Signorelli says

Muller and Becker's "Get Lucky" provides a good introduction, for those unfamiliar with the topic, to ways that we can through a variety of common-sense actions increase our luck in business and other endeavors. Among those foundational elements, not surprisingly, are the need for preparation so we can take advantage of opportunities as we come across them; casting a wide net to develop connections with others whose skills might combine with ours to produce results otherwise unavailable to us; and taking actions that draw people to us because we appear to be the beneficiaries of particularly good luck. One strength of the book is that it is rich in examples. The book, on the other hand, is far less compelling to those who have done even a moderate amount of reading on creativity, collaboration, and serendipity, for much of what is offered here repeats familiar stories and adds little to work like Jim Collins' "Great by Choice," Malcolm Gladwell's "Outliers," Frans Johansson's "The Medici Effect," and Jonah Lehrer's recently published and quickly withdrawn "Imagine." (For a more in-depth examination of the book, please see the article in ASTD's online "Learning Circuits" publication at <http://www.astd.org/Publications/News...>).

Book says

Get Lucky: How to Put Planned Serendipity to Work for You and Your Business by Thor Muller and Lane Becker

“Get Lucky” is an interesting guide on how to create a work environment conducive for “luck” and how to make it work for you. The founders of Get Satisfaction, Thor Muller and Lane Becker take the readers on a journey on how to foster serendipity and what to do with it once you find it. There are many interesting cases in the book including some familiar stories; however the book is uneven and the conclusions vary from solid to weak. This book includes ten chapters (including the eight business skills of serendipity): 1. Prepare for the Unpreparable, 2. Skill: Motion, 3. Skill: Preparation, 4. Skill: Divergence, 5. Skill: Commitment, 6. Skill: Activation, 7. Skill: Connection, 8. Skill: Permeability, 9. Skill: Attraction, and 10. Unraveling the Double Bind.

Positives:

1. Interesting business cases. Accessible book for the masses.
2. An interesting guide on how to make the best out of luck. It takes a unique angle (serendipity/luck) and applies it to the business world.
3. The authors do a good job of presenting their approach of “planned serendipity”. “It’s a set of concrete, attainable business skills that cultivate the conditions for chance encounters to generate new opportunities.”
4. The book revolves around applying the eight business skills of serendipity: Motion, Preparation, Divergence, Commitment, Activation, Connection, Permeability and Attraction. The authors introduce the skills applied to interesting business cases.
5. Good examples on how motion can lead to creative collisions. “Companies as a whole do their best work when, like Pixar, they have made room for the kind of unexpected encounters and opportunities that motion is likely to produce.”
6. A quote that captures the sentiment behind motion. “No matter how we try to make motion and the chance collisions that come with it normal and part of our routine, the truth is that chance, at base, is all about accepting risk. We create chance opportunities when we’re willing to take actions or put ourselves into situations that are new, or uncomfortable, or most importantly might not work out for us.”
7. Three behaviors that unveil the skill of preparation. “What connects these three behaviors is one basic truth: we cannot create new opportunities in the world if we do not first create room for them in our minds.”
8. The authors share some interesting psychological tidbits that make for fun reading. “The study was just the latest to explore an idea in psychology called construal level theory (CLT). The premise of the theory is that our minds represent things—objects, events, places, people—differently depending on how psychologically distant we perceive them to be.”
9. Divergence with a touch of “luck”. “Divergence is how lucky accidents, great and small, create the possibility for a new route to our destination—a direction we didn’t expect and couldn’t have predicted when we originally set out.”
10. Interesting discussion on the bias against creativity. “When we are asked to be creative inside our organizations—asked to look for newer, better ways to improve on what has come before—we are too often locked into a routine that implicitly inhibits our creativity and thus our ability to imagine and move in new directions.” The bookstore chain Borders provides one of the most memorable and strongest cases in the book.
11. The skill of commitment. “Commitment, an essential skill of planned serendipity, involves organizing ourselves around an overriding purpose. Commitment means having a point of view that’s so strong and expressed so powerfully that it actually transforms the environment around us.” The two distinct qualities of commitment.
12. The company In-N-Out provides a great example for committed organizations.
13. How the environment affects us. “Countless cues in our environment strongly influence whether we are observant, open-minded, and adaptable rather than fearful in the face of change. Factors we downplay, like the quality of natural light, the dress code, and the presence of laughter, may in fact make all the difference. Welcome to the skill of activation.”
14. A new approach to software development. “By taking up agile, the programmers that work at these

companies are essentially declaring independence from the fixed schedules that have failed them so many times before.”

15. The tools of connection. “The Internet is only the latest, though perhaps greatest, mechanism humanity has developed to increase the quantity of connections available to us.”

16. Good insights into the business practice of deflection.

17. The skill of permeability. “The skill of permeability is a natural outgrowth of the Internet, which makes it as easy for individuals to express themselves as a big organization. Get Satisfaction was our attempt to get businesses to listen and interact with these increasingly empowered individuals.”

18. Example of an uncanny ability to bring serendipity to themselves.

19. The skill of attraction. “Attraction changes how the outside world sees and interacts with us. It's how we engage people to change their behavior, transform the environment around them, and produce more serendipity-rich experiences, all in the service of the purpose that we have shared with them. Attraction is how we move the world in our direction.”

20. Bringing it together. “Combining these activities of attraction with the other seven skills of planned serendipity allows us to truly ‘level up’ in our ability to generate luck.” The conclusion is clear: to win friends and influence others, there is no substitute for living a meaningful life.

21. How to track progress with organizational serendipity. “We monitor the frequency of personal side projects among our staff, track new ideas generated after a lunchtime presentation series, and report on cross-functional collaborations spawned by random introductions in the atrium. All of these aim at the same thing: to give us some indication of how prepared we are for serendipity.”

Negatives:

1. The writing style is accessible but lacks panache. There is no humor and where is the lack of wonder for serendipity?

2. The book is uneven. Some cases get the red carpet treatment while others leave something to be desired. The Borders case study was excellent while the examples for connection left something to be desired.

3. The lack of visual tools to assist the reader. Summary tables, flow charts anything to complement the narrative would have been welcomed.

4. There is an entire notes section titled “Serendipiography” but the Kindle version did not take advantage of its ability to link. That’s disappointing.

5. No formal separate bibliography.

6. Scientific rigor? How strong is the consensus on some of the findings presented in the book? What do contrarians say?

7. How about cases where the illusion of luck betrayed even some of the best established companies?

In summary, the authors succeed in providing a spectrum of business cases that illustrate in practical terms the application of their approach to serendipity. There are a lot of interesting parts but there seems to be something missing at the core of the book and I can’t quite put my finger on it. The book is worth reading but will not leave a lasting impression. A mild recommendation with reservations noted.

Further recommendations: “Outliers” and “The Tipping Point” by Malcolm Gladwell, “Just Start” by Leonard A. Schlesinger, “The Hidden Agenda” by Kevin Allen, “The One Thing” by Gary Keller, “Switch” by Chip and Dan Heath, “inGenius” by Tina Seelig, “Work with Me” by Barbara Annis and John Gray, “Power: Why Some People Have It and Others Don’t” by Jeffrey Pfeffer, “The Power of Habit” by Charles Duhigg, “Rebounders: How Winners Pivot from Setback to Success” by Rick Newman, and “Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us”.

Yaron Zino says

Good read

I liked learning the skills required to invite serendipity into life and work. The examples are great although some of them are no longer relevant. All in all I enjoyed reading the book and now plan to bring theories to actions...

Dan says

I probably check out too many library books. Anyway I felt under pressure to get this one back to the library so I just ended up skimming it since I didn't really gel with the writing. I think they have some great ideas for prepared serendipity, but I just can't articulate them, thus the 4 out of 5. Maybe I'll do a re-read on this someday.
