



A NEW GAME IN TOWN

CREATE YOUR OWN FUTURE OF WORK FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Karen Mangia

I love to win.

In a time before smartphones, before Super Mario Bros.[™] started their family business, before Nintendo[®] made their Switch[™], my brother and I were notorious gamers. We played oldschool games that lasted for days. Board games. Card games. Puzzle games. Sometimes we even set up camp next to our games, with no screens or distractions to interrupt us. My brother would hunker down in his Hot Wheels sleeping bag. Mine was bright blue with a rainbow interior. I always kept a red plastic flashlight inside of my personal campsite—not because I was afraid of the dark, but because I wanted to keep a night watch over the game. And to make sure my brother was playing by the rules 24/7.

The day was built around the game. We curtailed the duration of breakfast and lunch to return to the game. Then we figured out how to sneak snacks upstairs so we could eat while we played the game. We skipped playing with friends to play the game. And we staged a united front with our parents to play the game: we didn't always like each other, but we were feverishly united in resisting anything that might pull us away from the game. Doctor visits. Dinner. Family time. Baths. Bedtime stories. We understood commitment. The game mattered most. Sound familiar?

Sometimes seemingly arbitrary obligations—like school and homework—required us to play shorter-duration games. Since my brother is four years younger than me, I would defer to him to choose the game on “quick game days.” He predictably returned with the same box. A board game called Life.

In the Game of Life®, players travel through their lives looking for success. Throughout the process, you earn money, make investments, get married, have children, and retire.

As you spin the wheel and advance your Game of Life®, you encounter a series of cross-roads. Take the short route and go directly to business and to a salary? Or take a detour to university and the long road to business and a career?

The strategy to win at the Game of Life®—by design—is to accumulate:

- Cars
- Cash
- Connections
- Collateral

No matter how you play the game, all of the players eventually reach the block on the board labeled in bright red: DAY OF RECKONING.

According to the rules on the box top, you must STOP in the DAY OF RECKONING SPACE.

Hey, guess where we all are right now?

The game of life no longer feels like child's play.

I've lived through the unintended implications of playing to win the game of life at all costs—and I'm not just talking about the flashlight next to my sleeping bag. I wrote about the high price I paid in my first book, *Success With Less*. And then I took a look at how the game changed, in my second book, *Working from Home*.

The pandemic brought us all to a simultaneous stop: a full stop in a space called the Day of Reckoning. And what our collective Day of Reckoning revealed is a tally of who's winning and who's losing in life. In real terms. With real people. Real people we know. Real people we care about. Real people who we want to win. I'm talking about our families. Our friends. Our local business owners. Our frontline workers. Ourselves.

You're here because you like to win. Are you ready to play a new game—so that you can find the success that will determine your future?

You and I now have to make a big decision. Let's decide, right now, how we move forward from the Day of Reckoning. Let's discover how to get unstuck from the patterns of the past.

The pandemic brought us all to a simultaneous stop: a full stop in a space called the Day of Reckoning.

After all, if you're going to win at the game of life, you have to see new pathways and perspectives. Otherwise, you're just going to keep retracing the same steps. In a post-pandemic era, each of us has a choice: a choice to design a new kind of game, regardless of how anyone else decides to design, play, or win their game. But wait a minute. Does that kind of flexibility sound too good to be true?

I still work in a huge corporation. I still have a boss. I still have deadlines. I still have meetings. But I designed a new game for myself with new rules and outcomes and measures of success.

No one else had to change their game design for me to change mine. Playing a game I can win means redefining what it means to win. And what I'm willing to do to win. Even if everyone else wants to play the same old game. Or play by someone else's rules.

My premise for you is a simple one: **What would happen if we could change the game of life altogether?**

I thought it was impossible. Until I met Fitch.

"I've got a dilemma," I told him as I adjusted my mask. "I keep thinking there must be a way for everyone to live and work better. These COVID days aren't going to last forever. Lots of people are burnt out. There's a lot of people who aren't being treated fairly. There's frustration for everybody," I said, looking at my shoes for inspiration. "I just don't know how. I feel stuck."

Fitch nodded his bushy head of hair. His bright blue eyes looked back at me, over his mask, with an unfiltered kindness and empathy. You know the friend who feels like family? That's Fitch. He's always on the lookout—keeping his eyes open for the next thing. That game-changing idea. That plan that we can all understand.

A slight breeze on the back patio brought the reminders of early fall in central Indiana. Rays of warm sunshine danced on our faces, as we sat in the big patio chairs on the new deck. Sunset would come soon. Sitting in the newly finished outdoor kitchen, we were pondering a way to make things better. Simple, right?

Fitch leaned forward. "I'm trying to do something with my new company," he explained. "Look at the swings in our backyard," he said, pointing to a large wooden playset that included monkey bars and a small fort up top. "I think *all kids should be able to play on a playground.*"

Fitch continued. "I wondered, 'How could I create a playground for every kid?'" That idea turned into a subscription candy service, where Fitch donates 10% of earnings to help pay for new swing sets on playgrounds.

Fitch laughed. What was so funny?

"I know the best way to get unstuck," he exclaimed as he rushed into the house, calling out to me over his shoulder. "Let's play a game!"

The Game of Life®?

He burst through the patio doors and laid something down on the patio table. What was he planning? I looked down and saw it: a silver pen on top of a simple white notepad, no bigger than a deck of playing cards.

Before I could ask questions, Fitch got down to business. He wielded the pen and paper like a master artist with a brush and canvas. A moment later, he revealed his masterpiece.

“Wow,” I said, “What game is this?” I wasn’t sure what the masterpiece was, exactly. Was Fitch going through his very own Blue Period, becoming a patio Picasso? Had he just invented his own alphabet, or was that a duck chasing a snowman? I was mystified—and intrigued.

“This is our game,” he stepped back and pointed at the pad, using the pen like a laser pointer. “The game we are going to play together.” He grinned, certain that he had solved the puzzle that I had yet to understand.

“What are the rules?” I asked. “How do you win? I’m not familiar with this game.” The duck might be a rock. I couldn’t be sure. I shifted forward in my seat to get a better view.

No one else had to change their game design for me to change mine. Playing a game I can win means redefining what it means to win.

“It’s simple,” he explained. “Just roll the dice. Choose a path. Any path that looks good to you.”

The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his [or her] work and his play, labor and leisure, mind and body, information and recreation, love and religion. [S]he hardly knows which is which. [S]he simply pursues a vision of excellence at whatever is being done, leaving others to decide whether it is working or playing. To the master, it is always both. –James Michener, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Tales of the South Pacific and 40 other books

An appearance from his co-CEO interrupted our pregame warm-up. Janna sat down cross-legged on the corner cushion. She flipped her stick-straight hair over her ears. She overheard the rules of the game. “I want to play, too!” she added.

I turned to Fitch. “If she joins, won’t you need to change the game?”

“Nope,” he replied without hesitation, as if he had already asked and answered the question in his own mind. Resolute, he continued, “I designed the game to accommodate everybody. To infinity. And there are just as many ways to win.”

A powerful realization struck me. My long-standing belief was that a game is an experience to execute. Designed by someone else, with a fixed set of rules, and resulting in one winner. Unlike my game-time focus on execution, Fitch saw a game as an experience to create. Designed with all possible players in mind, with a flexible set of rules, and room for everybody to play.

Fitch had the power to invent the game. He didn't have to follow someone else's rules, because he tapped into the power of a beginner's mind. How did he do it? Well, it's easy for him—Fitch is five years old.

In addition to being a full-time kindergarten student, Fitch is also the founder and co-CEO of [You've Got Candy](#). In front of him sat a blank sheet of paper—the beginnings of a new kind of game. He looked at it as an artist would:

- An artist knows that the blank page (or empty canvas) can become anything.
- An artist knows that any drawing can be changed, erased, or thrown out at any time.
- An artist knows how to step back and shape the picture to his or her liking.

Fitch wasn't following the rules. He was creating them. What was it that coach John Wooden said? "Make each day your masterpiece." Ever the entrepreneur, Fitch saw an opportunity to create a new game of life. A game designed on a simple yet profound premise:

- Every player wants to win.
- Every player has the ability (the potential) to win.
- Every player must have equal opportunity to win.
- Every player is welcome in the game, and you don't have to "bet it all" (or lose everything) in order to play.

Five-year-old Fitch saw what we often miss: **winning is an outcome of how you design the game.**

And everyone can be successful by design.

Was this just freedom in a child's eyes? Because I can remember a lot of times in my career when I felt limited. Constrained. Burdened by culture and norms and accepted behaviors and everything else. But freedom is a state of mind, not a set of rules.

Rules always exist; take the law of gravity, for example. But what would happen if we could all take Fitch to work with us? I'm not talking about pulling this kid out of kindergarten. I'm talking about using his ideas around a new game of life. How might we design the new world of work, the workplace, and the workforce differently? How might we redesign the role of work in our lives?

Unlike my game-time focus on execution, Fitch saw a game as an experience to create. Designed with all possible players in mind, with a flexible set of rules, and room for everybody to play.

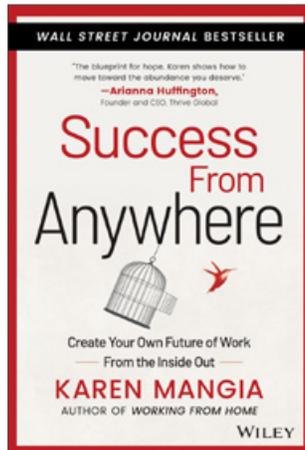
Does that idea make you a little uncomfortable? Does it make your boss, board, and customers uncomfortable? I hope so. I hope you have the courage to challenge the status quo, and play a new kind of game. They say there's nothing that can stop an idea whose time has come.

This pandemic took something from all of us. For some, it took everything. Now, I wonder: what will you take from this experience? Perhaps it's as simple as a pen and paper. And the simple decision that there's a new game in town.

Your game. You make the rules. You design your masterpiece. You create what's next. Are you ready to build that blueprint? 🏗️



Info



Ready to dig deeper into the book?
Buy a copy of [Success from Anywhere.](#)

Want copies for your organization or for an event? We can help:
customerservice@porchlightbooks.com 800-236-7323

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Mangia is one of the most sought-after keynote speakers in the world, sharing her thought leadership with over 10,000 organizations during the course of her career. As Vice President of Customer and Market Insights at Salesforce, she helps define, design, and deliver the future. She serves on multiple boards, including the Racial Equality & Justice Taskforce. She is the author of *Listen Up!* and *Working From Home*.

Find out more: karenmangia.com



Porchlight

Curated and edited by the people of Porchlight, ChangeThis is a vehicle for big ideas to spread. Keep up with the latest book releases and ideas at porchlightbooks.com.

This document was created on January 12, 2022 and is based on the best information available at that time.

The copyright of this work belongs to the author, who is solely responsible for the content. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License. To view a copy of this license, visit Creative Commons. Cover art from Adobe Stock.

SHARE THIS

Pass along a copy of this manifesto to others.

SUBSCRIBE

Sign up for e-news to learn when our latest manifestos are available.