



# Working the Dream

Take a cue from these four women and fuse your life's passion with your 9-to-5

BY KATHERINE REYNOLDS LEWIS

**W**e log a lot of hours in the office.

In fact, the average American now works 46.7 hours per week, which adds up to more than 2,400 hours a year. That's a lot of time to dedicate to something many of us feel less than passionate about.

But what if you could pursue your passion on the clock and turn a career into a dream job? These four women found a way to do just that — and offer advice on how you can do the same.



*"Believe in yourself"*

### SHERIN NICOLE

Creative director of idobi Networks

As creative director of digital radio company idobi Networks, Sherin Nicole oversees the development of new shows, arranges strategic partnerships, spearheads editorial projects, directs marketing and fills other roles as needed.

The interesting line of work has put her in meetings with rockers Joel Madden and Chuck Comeau (co-owners of the company), and she's crossed paths with childhood idols Ice T and Joan Jett.

"In a single day, I get to be a writer (and) executive, negotiate deals, talk to these wonderful creative companies ... then I get to put on my Chucks and be a production assistant at a live event," says Nicole, 42, of Washington, D.C. "What makes this my dream job is that I realize my total person. ... The consistent flow of creativity through multiple channels is everything."

Nicole stumbled into the work by volunteering to help her friend, idobi chief executive Tom Cheney, when he launched the streaming radio network in 1999. By 2013, the company was big enough that Cheney hired her full time. "What I had to learn was to put no ceilings on myself," she says. "I didn't have the confidence to build my own visions. The moment I changed my belief, I changed my fortune."

**INSPIRED?** Ask yourself: What barriers am I putting in front of my growth and success?



*"Seize your moment"*

### JILL SCALISI

Founder of Scalisi Skincare

As a young girl, Jill Scalisi loved mixing up potions from her mom's spices. But in college, she didn't think she had the intellectual heft to become a scientist. Instead, on-campus recruiters for Wall Street drew her into a two-decade career in finance that imploded with the recession in 2008.

As she was job hunting that summer, a skin cancer diagnosis completely rocked her world. "I thought, maybe this is a sign that I'm supposed to be doing something differently," recalls the Scarsdale, N.Y., single mother of two.

When she couldn't find a skin cream that combined natural ingredients, scientific research and a luxurious feel, she decided to create her own. Thus, Scalisi Skincare was born. For a while, she worked full time in finance while building the business. But in 2012, she made the company her focus.

"It was absolutely terrifying. I said, 'I'm going to re-evaluate every quarter,'" says Scalisi, 47. She called on previous experiences to find the courage to seize her moment: "In a split second, anything can change." The leap of faith was worth it: Her company has won the Cosmetic Executive Women's up-and-coming beauty company award and sells products online through Birch Box and Amazon, in spas and hotels and through QVC.

**INSPIRED?** Ask yourself: What's a passion I gave up to pursue a secure income? How can I find the courage to seize my moment now? >>



*"Take a risk"*

### ALEXANDRA ISERN

National Science Foundation researcher

Who wouldn't enjoy playing with baby penguins on a frozen island in the Antarctic? Or traveling on a massive Swedish ice breaker to islands otherwise inaccessible to humans?

Those are the kinds of once-in-a-lifetime opportunities Alexandra Isern has experienced during her 14-year career at the National Science Foundation (NSF). Isern's role is to facilitate cutting-edge research on earth science, hydrology, paleontology, geochemistry and related fields by leading trips to Antarctica and reviewing grant proposals.

"The research is so incredibly interesting and relevant, and you're in the most beautiful place ever," says Isern, 49, of Washington, D.C. But this dream job almost wasn't.

When Isern was a graduate student and early-career professor, she couldn't imagine leaving academia for another career. But when she took the risk and left, she realized how soul-crushing that environment had been for her.

At the NSF, she blossomed. She now enjoys having a higher-level view of scientific progress and advising researchers on how to make their grant proposals more compelling. "It's like pitching a movie script. It has to be something that excites people. It's got to be written well. It's got to tell a story," explains Isern.

**INSPIRED?** Ask yourself: What's keeping me in my current career? What would I risk by making a change?



*"Find service in work"*

### ERIN DOERWALD

Family therapist at the non-profit SKY Center

Erin Doerwald's journey to her dream job began in a mindful-parenting class. There she discovered a meditation practice that not only helped her raise her children, but eased her own longstanding anxiety and depression.

She began studying mindfulness and eventually trained to become a family therapist. She now works as a therapist and program coordinator at the SKY Center, a youth suicide prevention nonprofit in Santa Fe.

Doerwald previously worked in film production, art galleries and event planning. Her current role brings together many of the skills she learned from other jobs as she leads youth groups in schools, trains social work graduate students, refines the nonprofit's curriculum and organizes programs in the community.

As a bonus, her work schedule aligns with the school calendar so she has summers off with daughter Georgiana, 9, and son Max, 5.

"The fact that we have so many levels of service targeted to kids and families and at a community level ... is why I love it so much," says Doerwald. "I am never bored. We are delivering a very life-affirming and unique service, one that touches my heart."

**INSPIRED?** Ask yourself: How can I add an element of service to my current career or pursue purposeful work for my dream job? ●