

SAMPLE

STAND OUT!

Become a **Young Professional**
Who Wins at Work and Life



Nathan Magnuson

Praise for Stand Out!

“The heroes we want to model are more than high performers at work. They understand themselves, exhibit leadership with integrity and compassion and have meaningful relationships. And typically they’ve been around a while. But here’s a clear guide for attaining that notable success in your 30s or even 20s. Nathan’s concise principles create a clear plan to authentically be the ‘Young Professional Employee Every Organization Wants.’ This is the book I wish I had coming off the farm many years ago.”

– DAN MILLER

New York Times bestselling author of *48 Days to the Work You Love* and host of the *48 Days* Podcast

“Nathan Magnuson is a leader compelled by the unshakeable desire to serve others... he was born to help people grow! In his most recent book, *Stand Out!*, Nathan brings his trademark candor and freshness to the day-to-day realities faced by young professionals around the world. His advice is born of experience and his wisdom forged in the trenches of the modern workplace. This book should be required reading for new employees, and probably all the others, at every organization.”

– MARK MILLER

VP, High Performance Leadership, Chick-fil-A, Inc. & International Bestselling Author of *Chess Not Checkers*

“There are leadership books with great sounding theories and then there are ones with practical advice designed to propel action. *Stand Out!* is the latter. Not only does Nathan share lessons learned from his own leadership experiences, he coaxes readers to look both inward in reflection and outward toward creating a richer, more meaningful tomorrow, for

themselves and others. This book is an excellent field manual for young professionals who wish to accelerate their personal and professional growth.”

– JANET KAMERMAN
Executive Assistant Director (retired), Federal Bureau
of Investigation

“*Stand Out!* provides many significant insights for young professionals looking to gain a leg up in their early careers – lessons I learned through trial and error on my own career journey. The need to expedite the development of young professionals to take on significant leadership roles has never been greater, and Nathan continues to be a trusted thought leader in making this a reality.”

– ERIC EVANS
CEO, Surgery Partners, Inc

“This is a message every young professional needs. In a culture characterized by blame, entitlement, and indecision, *Stand Out!* stands out! Success begins with personal accountability and as Nathan writes, you’re never too young to set a good example. Thank you for encouraging our young professionals, Nathan!”

– JOHN G. MILLER
Author of *QBQ! The Question Behind the Question*

“In a world where job possibilities are endless, Nathan helps equip young professionals with tools necessary to get them into their zones of excellence. Life should be a ruthless pursuit of purpose and Nathan helps young people fulfill both passions and professions!”

– CHRIS TUFF
Bestselling author of *The Millennial Whisperer*

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Introduction

Hi, I'm Nathan. I wrote this book because I care about you.

But you don't even know me, you may be thinking. You're probably right, but let me explain.

During my final round of interviews for a past job opportunity, my prospective new bosses were impressed with my knowledge and experience but wanted a bit more convincing of my relationship-building skills. They were both big-time “people people” and didn't want to make a hiring mistake. They asked me how I demonstrated compassion at work. It was a fair question. I answered honestly that when there was a problem, I didn't tend to be the first person to give people hugs – although I could if I needed to. But I took great pride in identifying the source of the problem and solving it for good. That way, it couldn't ruin people's day anymore! That must have convinced them because they extended an offer and we worked together for several years.

If you're a young professional, we've shared some similar experiences. I know many of the challenges you've faced, problems you've encountered and times when you just needed a friend to help you cope. I've been there too. I recognize some of the scenes from your highlight reel as well. I wish I'd had a guide ready for me when I began my journey. It would've helped me cast a bigger vision while also setting more realistic expectations. It would've saved many tough lessons along the way. It would've saved a lot of time and money too. That's

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what I hope this book can be for you. There were definitely times when I wanted to sleep in a bit longer or watch more football games than to keep writing. But when I remembered the times when nothing seemed to make sense, I knew I had to share these encouraging words with you.

What has your young professional experience been so far?

When I reflect on the moments that have shaped my young professional experience to this point, certain ones stand out above the others, for a wide variety of reasons.

Some moments profoundly shaped who I've become, like the day in Dr. Jeff Myers' organizational leadership class when I realized I wanted to work in corporate leadership development... but had no idea how to get started. Or my first mission in Kirkuk, Iraq as a member of the U.S. Army Special Operations. Or the meeting where a senior executive decided to fire a young professional colleague for acting entitled to a promotion he hadn't earned... and I realized I'd had a similar attitude myself.

Some were really disappointing, like my 90th day in my first job after college when the thought of working in accounting for another 90 days seemed like pure torture. Or when I made it to final interviews for my dream job at my dream company after years of trying, but didn't get it. (I was so disappointed when they called to tell me that I got tongue-tied and could barely speak!) Or the day I was part of a mass layoff and told to "act professional" as security escorted me out of the building. Or the year I worked the hardest and produced the best work in my career, but my annual bonus was only 17 cents on the dollar because of the company's dismal financial performance that year.

Some were exciting, like when I was accepted into Accenture's management consulting practice and got to build

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a new leadership development program for the FBI. Or the day a couple senior leaders asked me how I “always knew what we should do next” and I realized for the first time I might actually have a clue what I was doing. Or the first time I asked for a big raise... and got it!

Some were just confusing, like the day I accidentally wired \$77 million to the wrong bank. (I’ll tell you how that event impacted my career trajectory in Chapter 4.) Or the year I received an unexpected low performance review, but when I asked for specific feedback, I only received positive examples. Or the time it took 330 applications to finally land a new job.

My collection of experiences is unique to me, but I’m guessing you’ve been in some similar situations – situations that were inspiring, upsetting, exhilarating or disillusioning.

I’m convinced that it’s more exciting to be a young professional now than at any other point in history.

Nearly everything about the way work is performed is in the midst of a major transformation. Information and analytics make it possible to “know” almost anything. Advances in technology have made almost any challenge seem possible to overcome. Communication and social media continue to shape and reshape the way we interact inside and outside of work. The rapid pace of change will remain the status quo and today’s young professionals are main characters in determining the outcomes of major efforts currently underway.

Young professionals today are the leaders of tomorrow.

Young professionals today are the leaders of tomorrow.

Unfortunately, not everything about being a young professional is easy. The more options, the more hesitancy.

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Are we making the right career moves? Are we missing out on something better? Why does work feel so routine? When will we land our dream job? When will our ideas be taken seriously? How can we bounce back from a major setback? Why does progress take so long? Will we ever get promoted?

If you've asked any of these questions, you're in good company. The answers are available. Not only that, your organization has a vested interest in helping you along the journey. After all, you're the one who will help them solve tomorrow's problems that they're not even aware of yet.

Let's talk for a moment about how to use this book. It's divided into ten short chapters with over fifty tips for increasing your effectiveness and engagement with your life, your work and your leadership as a young professional. We'll ask some of the deepest questions and explore some of the toughest challenges together.

Specifically, inside this book you'll learn how to:

- Take ownership in a way that makes success not just possible but probable.
- Cultivate a winning attitude that stands out among your peers.
- Articulate your personal brand and put it to productive use.
- Shape the conversation your organization is having about you in positive ways.
- Identify the key elements of a career purpose – and how to find yours.
- Find more satisfaction with the job you currently have, starting now.

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- Become the team player your organization needs and will reward.
- Navigate your early career with the savvy of a seasoned veteran.
- Lead when your time comes – and even before then.
- And much more...

Remember how I said that I wrote this book because I care about you... and that I like to help solve problems? I'm a consultant at heart, so before we begin, let me share my top tips for getting the most out of this book. Use them, and it'll drastically improve your results.

- **One chapter at a time** – You could probably finish the entire book in an hour or two. Resist the urge. Read only one or two chapters at a time. You wouldn't do ten physical workouts in one day. Take the same approach with this book. You'll get much better and longer lasting results.
- **Reflect** – Each chapter includes a list of key questions to get the most from the content. Answering the questions actually has more value than reading the pages. Take the time to reflect. Journal your personal insights. Best of all, discuss them with someone else.
- **Share** – Throughout the book are short quotes, quips and tips. Share the ones that stand out to you, either on social media or with your colleagues or peer group. When you repeat an idea, it becomes your own. And don't forget to use the #youngprofessionals hashtag!
- **Enlist a buddy or small group** – No leader learns alone. You'll go farther faster when you go

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partner together. Invite a group of young professional peers at work to form a book club and read along together because you can implement the ideas in the context of your organization. Or, you might pick a community or social group as well – or simply invite a buddy to join you. If you do, will you send me a note at nathan@nathanmagnuson.com and let me know how it goes?

- **Don't try to do it all** – As I mentioned, there are over 50 tips included in this book, some of which took me several years to articulate, not to mention accomplish. (And I'm still working on many of them.) You'll get overwhelmed if you try to implement all of them at the same time. For each chapter, highlight the one or two that present the greatest impact now. You can circle back to the others later on.

Legendary NFL football coach Vince Lombardi once stated, “Winning isn’t everything, but the will to win is.” Your time to shine is right around the corner. Are you ready to step up and stand out?

This book will help you get there.

P.S. – As a thank you for taking this journey with me, I've included a few special bonuses. The first is a list of [*20 Ways to Be More \(Young\) Professional*](#). It's included at the back of the book and is also available as a separate download. It works great as a 20 day challenge for yourself or your peer group. The second is a resource called [*Decision-Making Hacks for Young Professionals*](#) to help you keep moving forward despite uncertainty. The third is called [*5 Ways to Win the Hearts of Your Young Professionals*](#), which is geared toward leaders, executives and HR professionals. If you'd like the leaders in

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your organization to be more involved with young professional issues, this is the perfect resource to share with them. You can find more information about each of these bonuses waiting for you in the pages at the end of the book or by visiting www.nathanmagnuson.com/resources.

Let's get started!

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Ownership – You’re the Boss of You

If you grew up with siblings like I did, you likely had frequent arguments about who was the boss of whom. Throughout the course of the day, any given interaction was liable to escalate into a full blown confrontation, ending with someone yelling, “You’re not the boss of me!” It’s probably not a stretch to assume you uttered those words yourself as a youngster too.

I’ve come to notice that adults aren’t much different than children, we just get better (sometimes) at keeping our impulses in check. But when it comes to who is boss, we’d all benefit from repeating the mantra from time to time, but with a slight variation. That’s right, it’d probably do a world of good to drop what we’re doing, run up to our peers, fists clenched and face puckered, and declare for the eternal record, “I’m the boss of *me!*”

Ownership. So intrusive, liberating, intimidating and empowering all at the same time. Stephen Covey identified it as “being proactive” in his first of seven habits of highly effective

When we take ownership of our life, everything that is possible for our life expands exponentially.

people.¹ John Maxwell refers to it as the Law of Intentionality.² Others simply call it taking personal responsibility.

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Hopefully, it's not a great stretch to convince you that taking ownership of each aspect of your life is a worthy endeavor. It's a good sentiment, but what does it mean in day-to-day practice?

Accept Responsibility for Your Life Choices

Have you ever stopped to notice how many people are ready to make your choices for you, if you'll let them? Family members sometimes apply significant pressure to major life decisions. Employers have a point of view on your career trajectory. And marketers will always try to convince you that you can't live without their products – it's so obvious it shouldn't even be a choice!

Zig Ziglar observed, "You are where you are in life because of a series of choices you have made."³ The good news is that when you change your choices, you change your outcomes. That's the liberating thing about taking ownership – it means each of us has the power to achieve greatness.

When you change your choices, you change your outcomes.

Until you and I accept responsibility for our choices – every single one of them, past, present and future – we haven't accepted complete

ownership. We're still abdicating some of the responsibility to be the "boss of me" to someone else.

Set Your Direction

Andy Stanley noted that, "Direction, not intention, determines destination." If you really are the boss of you, that means accepting the responsibility to define success on your own terms and chart your own course.

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Self-determination sounds attractive, but it's a lot harder than it seems on the surface. It requires turning down the volume on all the other clamoring voices and opinions that are quick to intrude and choosing a route that may lead off the beaten path from time to time. And it's especially tricky for young professionals, who are still relatively new to making significant life decisions, such as what career direction (or re-direction) to pursue, where to live, how to manage their finances and whether to commit to a relationship long-term.

“Direction, not intention, determines destination.”

– Andy Stanley

If you've ever felt uncomfortable making big decisions without having all the information or being 100% certain of the outcome, welcome to life. The decisions themselves won't get easier, but your ability to rise to the challenge will become more natural with practice. Keep in mind, you can change the course without giving up on the destination.

You can change the course without giving up on the destination.

By the way, the second bonus at the end of this book *Decision-Making Hacks for Young Professionals* will help you navigate the complicated, murky decisions you encounter along your journey.

Embrace the Grind

Have you ever decided to sign up for a 5K race with your friends only to realize that training runs are tough, especially when you're a little (or a lot) out of shape? If you've been in that situation, you know that the only way to finish with a decent time and reach your goal is to push through the discomfort of your training runs. Which is the greater

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accomplishment: showing up for race day or showing up each day of the process leading up to it?

Almost nothing worth having comes without sustained effort. As they say, if it were easy, everyone would be doing it. Every day you commit to making progress and doing the difficult, lonely work is a day you achieve greatness. The only way to persevere when the going gets tough is to embrace the grind.

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Build Your Resilience

It's a fact of life that not everything will go as planned on your journey to success. There will be hiccups, detours and disappointments along the way. You'll need to adjust your plans and your expectations more than once. You'll need to overcome your own mistakes. You'll also need to overcome the poor decisions of others that affect you, as well as the setbacks of life we all encounter.

That said, the unexpected brings good things too – even if they are packaged differently than we hoped or planned for.

How many setbacks will it take for you to give up? As long as the answer is, “at least one more,” you'll make it. As the Japanese proverb encourages, “Fall down seven times, stand up eight.”

Own the Outcome

My first experience with investing took place in 2005 in one of my business classes. I “invested” \$500,000 in an online simulator that mirrored the open market for 10 weeks. By the end of the semester, I had earned a 60% annual return and

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had more money than everyone else in the class, including the professor.

My first real world experience with investing took place in 2007. Before going on a 12 month overseas deployment with the Army, I invested \$20,000 I had meticulously saved from my signing bonus and boot camp earnings with a carefully selected and conservative professional advisor. You can probably guess what happened next. The market crashed in 2008 and a few months later my portfolio was worth only about \$8,000. It still makes me a little sick thinking about it today.

How do you respond when you do everything the “right” way, but things turn out horribly wrong? For me, I could’ve blamed my advisor, blamed the economy or blamed bad timing. None of that would’ve changed the outcome.

In their book *Extreme Ownership*, ex-Navy SEALs Jocko Willink and Leif Babin sum up ownership to a T. “The leader must own everything in his or her world. There is no one else to blame.”

When the twists and turns of life don’t go our way, we have the opportunity to take a deep breath, accept and own the outcome, reassess and continue on. It’s the first step toward achieving greatness.

You’re the boss of you. Choose to be the best boss you can be. The key is ownership.

*Sow a thought, reap an action
Sow an action, reap a habit
Sow a habit, reap a character
Sow a character, reap a destiny*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Key Takeaways

- Taking ownership is all about accepting responsibility.
- When you change your choices, you change your outcomes.
- Taking ownership requires hard work and overcoming adversity.
- Blaming your situation on other people and circumstances is the opposite of ownership and will stunt your ability to make progress.

Discussion Questions

1. What is one of the best choices you've made in your life so far? One of the worst choices?
2. What choice are you wrestling with right now?
3. What direction are you currently pointing toward? Are you taking life as it comes to you or pursuing something you've determined is meaningful and worthwhile?
4. Where do you need to take more ownership in your life?
5. What's the biggest setback you've overcome so far? What did you learn from it?

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About Nathan



Nathan Magnuson is a leadership and young professional expert and serves as a consultant, coach and speaker for corporate audiences. He's worked in a staff or consulting role with many Fortune 500 companies and large public service organizations, including Accenture, MASCO, FBI and Defense Intelligence Agency, among others. Nathan is also a military veteran, having served with the Army Special Operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

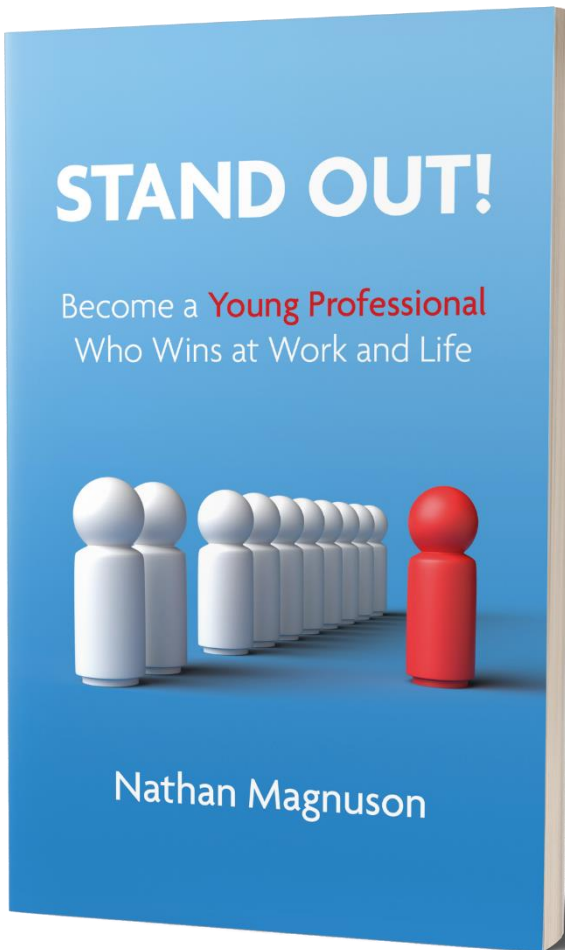
In addition to corporate work, Nathan is also an active author, having written the books [*Stand Out!*](#) and [*Ignite Your Leadership Expertise*](#). Nathan's articles and resources are posted on his website NathanMagnuson.com and in various leadership publications.

You can follow Nathan on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or on his [website](#). To inquire about speaking, consulting or coaching for young professional initiatives, contact nathan@nathanmagnuson.com.



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