

EPISODE 1173

“LP: Having a positive attitude doesn’t mean that you don’t feel sad or you don’t mourn what’s passed. But what I think it does mean is that you’ve got to be realistic about what the current and future situation looks like. I’m honestly not a huge fan of the sort of jobs of the future, like everybody should be a coder. If that’s appealing to you, great! But you’ve got to look at what’s really out there now, and realize that we’re in a certain situation. The economy is what it is right now, but you might have to be more creative in applying your skills and interest, and strengths to certain jobs.”

[INTRODUCTION]

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FT: Welcome to So Money, everybody. #motivationmonday. We’re going to talk about the future of work and what we can do to best prepare ourselves for a post-COVID career track. I’m your host, Farnoosh Torabi. My guest today is a friend of the show, Lindsey Pollak, who is a best-selling author, and speaker, and expert on career trends, and helping young professionals in organizations navigate the workplace. She’s out with a new book *called Recalculating: Navigate Your Career Through the Changing World of Work*. In it, she discusses how we’re going to adapt to a hybrid of remote and in-person experiences. The expansion of the gig economy and alternative employment options.

Like your personal GPS, Lindsey is here to talk about how to handle workplace obstacles, helping you see them as challenges to navigate rather than impossible roadblocks. Whether you’re somebody who lost her job in this pandemic, recession is looking to go back to graduate school or start a whole new career path, we’ve advice for you in the next half hour. Here’s Lindsey Pollak.

[INTERVIEW]

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FT: Lindsey Pollak, welcome back to So Money. So happy to have you on the show.

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LP: I am so honored to be a second-time guest. Thank you.

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FT: I know. I mean, I wish I could have you on more often, especially these days with so many question marks about the future of work. You have been spending almost all your career, 20 years following the trends and educating and coaching professionals on how to achieve career success, professional success. You've written multiple books, you've given hundreds, maybe thousands of talks. And your latest book is called *Recalculating: Navigate Your Career Through the Changing World of Work*. I'm curious, how has the last year, Lindsey, led you to use the words of your book, recalculate your career or maybe your own approach to work.

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LP: It's such a great question. I think that I write books to learn what I want to learn. I've heard other people say that as well.

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FT: Good reason.

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LP: Exactly. I wrote *Getting from College to Career* because I didn't know how to do that. I wrote *Becoming the Boss* because I was a terrible manager and I wanted to be better. And

when COVID hit, I lost almost all of my professional speaking business very, very quickly. My instincts in those kinds of challenging moments is, what's everybody else doing, who should I learn from, what can I do. I started writing about it, and interviewing people. It's funny, with most of my books, the title has come at the end. But I remember when I started losing business, and I was getting nervous about what I would sort of do. I remember feeling like that moment when you're in your car, and you go down the wrong path, and the GPS says recalculating.

What stood out to me about that, because I'm not a very good driver as I'm learning because I'm not in the city anymore and need to drive a car is that, when it recalculates, it means there's another way you can go. So the way that I've recalculated, I'd say 80% to 90% of my business before COVID was speaking. I realized how important it is to diversify that income with writing, and consulting and other ways of earning income, so that's been my biggest lesson.

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FT: I love the title *Recalculating*, because yes, we've all been in that situation where the GPS fails us or leads us down to like a pond and you're trying to get to Trader Joe's. That happened to me. I think in that moment, you realize how vulnerable you are when things are just on autopilot, when you just set the GPS and follow it. That was really the metaphor for me, Lindsey, when I read the title. I was like, "Yeah." And we need to remember, that we can direct ourselves, like if we want to use the car metaphor again, like when you're in your car and your GPS is recalculating, what else can kick in to help you get to your destination, right? Your history as a driver, your knowledge of the neighborhood, the fact that you have a car with gas in it, use your resources, tap into your history, your wealth of resources, your network, all of that to figure out your direction. In your book, you write for everybody, whether that's like someone who's just coming out of college, trying to find their way, someone who was laid off from an industry that is maybe in quick sand, someone who's thinking about becoming an entrepreneur.

Also, I think a lot of us who have been inspired in this past year to pursue a new path. I just read that medical school applications are up 20%, which is a wonderful surprise. I would think that people might be frightened to enter the healthcare field after COVID, but actually, it's prompted people to be looking for something more meaningful and inspiring. You said the first rule or I guess step, wherever you are, if you heard yourself in those descriptions' listeners, Lindsey says, we have to learn how to adapt to this new normal. What is the new normal?

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LP: The reality is, I love your assessment of all of it, and keep the driving metaphors coming. I'm collecting them as I promote this book. There are lots of them.

I think you hit on so much, which is that, we don't really have a choice, right? Nobody asked for this situation. I think the new normal is a normal of recalculating. I'm not sure anyone could go on autopilot or coast, but I think it was a lot easier in the past than it is now, and coasting might have look like having a business that generates a certain amount of income, working at a company where you felt very secure. I don't think very many people feel secure in very many situations right now, and I think a lot of us blame ourselves. But it's really situational or systemic that that is right now not the world that we live in. If you have the mindset that recalculating, or pivoting, or constantly learning and growing is no longer because you're doing something wrong. It's because you want to stay fresh, and you want to stay relevant, and you want to keep up. It doesn't mean that you have to drive yourself crazy and be working all the time, but the idea of staying, just as we do as consumers, right? Picking up the newest technologies, watching the newest shows. We need to really apply that to our careers as well.

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FT: You talked about the importance in Chapter 1 of really having a positive mindset attitude, and I think that can be really hard depending on what you've experienced in the last years. Let's say you're a working mother who had to leave the workforce as so many women did, because they couldn't work and take care of others at the same time. We didn't have a system

in place. You talked about how this acceleration that we've all experienced in this pandemic, it's not always a positive acceleration. It's not always forward momentum, that's fair, you want to recognize not. But like how do you stay positive, and how do you take on a positive attitude if you are one of those people who experienced more crisis in the last year?

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LP: It's a sticky point and I'm almost embarrassed sometimes. This is my fourth book and it's really the first time I've written extensively about mindset, which is sort of unbelievable. I was to tactical, right? Do this, do that, fill at you LinkedIn profile. That just was not going to cut it with this book, even in my own experience. A couple of things that really rang out, I interviewed a lot of people for this book and number one was, if you've been through a tough year, particularly a tough year for so many people, it's okay to take time to mourn. It's okay to say, "I didn't want to lose my job." My very, very first job is at a website called workingwoman.com based on the magazine. It went bankrupt after 18 months, and I was sad, I was bummed. I wanted to keep working there. I probably still be there if it existed. I realized I took six months to find a job and some of that was because I was sad, and because I wanted to there. Number one, it's okay to feel that lost, and having a positive attitude doesn't mean that you don't feel sad. or you don't mourn what's past. But what I think it does mean is that you've got to be realistic about what the current and future situation looks like.

I'm honestly not a huge fan of the sort of jobs of the future, like everybody should be coder. If that's appealing to you, great. But you've got to look at what's really out there now and realize that we're in a certain situation, the economy is what it is right now. But you might have to be more creative in applying your skills, and interests, and strengths to certain jobs. Just one really small tactical tip. Social media is just part of almost everybody's life right now, and I did a lot of research on passive social media use versus active. Passive is doing scrolling on Instagram, and feeling like everybody else is more successful and happy than you are, and that is really damaging, which we all kind know. But active social media scrolling can be really inspirational. Right? If I see, "Oh! Farnoosh is doing that radio, I want to do that." It's not, "I'm so jealous." It's, "Okay. I found something I want." Now, I can go and pursue it, and look up

jobs and look up opportunities. I think part of the positive mindset is believing that you could have what you want, you just have to go out and identify it.

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FT: To your point, you interviewed so many people who are these so-called recalculators. Can you give us some examples to kind of illustrate your points here, of how to pivot, or how to take on a positive mindset, or how to make lemonade out of lemons, all of that? What are some of the stories that really stood out to you?

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LP: Well first, I think it's what you said about people becoming doctors, many people said, "Look, the work is falling apart, nothing is how I wanted. I might as well do something I love or feel is going to make a difference in the world, so I'm not surprised to hear that the numbers of people going to medical school are up, business starts are tremendously up, of people saying, "I want to work for myself now." Many, many people use this crisis as an opportunity to pivot to something more meaningful, or more in line with their values. Another example that I love was the recent college graduate, whose job got rescinded, and she started working at a grocery store because that's who was hiring after she graduated from college in a class of 2020. She said, "I like it. I don't want to do it for the rest of my life, but what I'm realizing is, "I like talking to people. I like being in the environment that's not an office. This is kind of a good thing."

Instead of saying. "It's not what I want. I can't enjoy any of it," she looked for the aspects of that grocery store job that were meaningful to her. I have an entire chapter in the book about turning any job into a good job. You can always learn and grow from pretty much anything. I thought she was a good example of that. The third example I want to give is of a chef, who again, restaurants were closing. He was also kind of a little tired of being a chef, but he didn't want to like start over again from the beginning.

One of the studies that I learned about, was about, what they call lane changing, which is often a career change, or a pivot, or recalculation. It doesn't mean you go back and start from scratch. Just like when you're driving, if you go the wrong way, when you go into the pond on your way to Trader Joe's, you don't go back to your driveway and start again. You take everything you've done up to that point and apply it. When he did a career assessment test and learned what he was good at, what came out really strongly was the chef was really good at logistics, because he had ordered ingredients and how to deal with deliveries. He ended up taking a one credit class for a month and a great job in logistics, because he already had so many of the skills. I think that thought that you don't have to start from scratch is a really powerful motivator for people need to make a change.

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FT: That is so true. I mean, the pandemic has really brought to the forefront some of our more passive skillsets or things that we took for granted. For example, that chef who maybe didn't really appreciate some of his other attributes that he was bringing to work, but now, these are the skills that are going to really propel him to his next opportunity. I don't know if your book touches on college and grad school, but I wonder if there is also a recalculating of what it means to get a degree and use that degree to advance your profession. Maybe you've written about this in the past, but like my brother for example, he went to college, studied economics. But it was literally a summer program, learning how to do create websites and learning UX design. That is now the thing that he does as an entrepreneur. He's like, I guess college is great because I made friends and I have a social network, but it did not actually lead me to my career path.

For those people who are listening who are thinking about transitioning or pivoting, and they think that a degree is what's going to get them over that bridge, is it always the case? Should we recalculate our thinking there a little bit?

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LP: Absolutely. I think this is a case where COVID has accelerated trends that we're already happening. I remember writing a blog post years ago, "Does My College Major Matter." Like everyone I interviewed on the planet said, "Nope." For certain industries, it does, a very small few like architecture. But for the most part, it really doesn't matter. When it comes to deciding to go to graduate school, or to go back to school, I think that should be your last choice. Obviously, to be a doctor, you have to get a medical degree. But this idea, which used to be really popular particularly during the financial crisis of "writing out" the recession in graduate school. The amount of debt that you're going to take on doing that is, I know you know all too well is not worth it.

I interviewed someone from General Assembly, which does a lot of —

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FT: That's where my brother went, General Assembly.

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LP: Yeah. There's a lot of those training course, I had a feeling. They said, look, even before you invest in something like General Assembly go watch a YouTube video and see if you like UX, right? And see if it's something that's actually interesting. To make an investment of time, and money in something like a graduate program, you better be absolutely sure that that's what you want because there are so many micro programs and credentials out there. Even like a LinkedIn learning, or a video or a podcast, where you can learn so much. Start with that before you make the bigger commitment.

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FT: What are some of the job opportunities that have accelerated in the pandemic? You talked about some of this in your book, while some industries have fallen, and they may rise again but

maybe they'll look different. What are some of the other areas that people who are looking for new opportunities, who might still be in that navigation space might want to know about?

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LP: There are lot of different job functions and industries that have gotten a lot of attention, and rightly so. Just look at your daily life. Something like logistics has grown tremendously. Financial services have done quite well, healthcare is obviously growing. If you look at around in the community, that's a really helpful way to go. One of the things that I tell people all the time, there's a difference between job function and industry. Take that example of the grocery store. If you look at the top grocery stores in the world, yes, they have cashier jobs and that's what that college graduate did. But they also have marketing jobs, and accounts receivable job, and operations jobs, and PR jobs, and human resources jobs. Just because an industry is not the most exciting thing to you, the job opportunities within it might be really appealing. So I think looking at industry is just as important as job function.

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FT: Yeah. I always said I wanted to work in media, and I didn't care if I was working at a plumbing company. If I was able to do media somehow, tangential, right? I think it was also Kevin Costner, I'm really dating myself, who was obsessed with film. And he was like, "Even if I'm just picking up trash on a film lot, I will be happy. The point is, it's like, sometimes you just need to get yourself in that role or close to that role. It's a great first step.

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LP: I love that you mentioned plumbing. It's so interesting. It feels like plumbing, electricians, sort of the trades.

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FT: They're having a moment.

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LP: Not only they're having a moment, but I actually did a gig at a Plumbing Manufacturers Association, and two things about plumbing. Number one, for people who are interested in the environment, the water issues related to plumbing are extraordinary, so a lot of environmentalists are going into plumbing. Secondly, a lot of these trade industries are realizing that they've lost a lot of ground getting students to go into them after high school or college, which used to be how those fields grew. Now they're really promoting themselves as second and third career choices. The insurance industry as well, they said, "Look, we know a 22-year-old doesn't want to work at an insurance company, but a 32-year-old or 42-year-old might. Sometimes when you're later in your career, opportunities that you thought were gone suddenly become very appealing at a really good industries that used to recruit out of high school or college.

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FT: Speaking of age groups, you also write in your book about how more Americans are living and working into their '70s, '80s and beyond, something that we already saw happening pre-pandemic but it's only accelerated.

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LP: For a lot of people, it's a necessity, but I am constantly surprised by for how many people, it's a choice, right? They want to keep working, they feel vital, they want to contribute, they want to do something. I think it's a huge trend. Ageism is real, and it's insidious, and it's against the law, so I know a lot of people struggle with that. But there are a large number of companies, CDS comes to mind, that are specifically recruiting people over 55. Even just a quick story that I loved, was a community pool in Galveston, Texas was having a really hard time getting teenagers to want to work at the pool as lifeguards, because they all want to be an

intern at Goldman Sachs and go to grad school, and do all this stuff. They started recruiting people over 55, and the way they reached them was by advertising in the newspaper, because that's the only place that they would actually look. They started getting all of these very, very healthy and fit retirees who are in their 50s, 60s and 70s who absolutely job and did terrific work in it.

Just because we have stereotype that a lifeguard has to look like Zac Efron and be 18 years old isn't necessarily true. Sometimes these stereotypes are really getting our way of where the opportunities really are.

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FT: Before you go, I want to touch on two big themes that we're all experiencing in this pandemic. One is the integration or I like to call it the colliding of work and life, and where is that going post-COVID. Then also, remote work. I worked from home anyways, but even my own experience of working in person has diminished tremendously in the pandemic. Going forward, I'm hearing rumblings of big Fortune 500 companies, big tech companies, telling their employees, "We're pretty much going to let you do whatever you want. You can work remotely. You can come in person. Or actually, maybe only going to have a third of the staff back physically, because we're going to try to save on rent." Let's first start with work and life and that integration, what are you hearing from the employer side of things as far as what they're going to put in place or what they're already making permanent to help their employees feel more of that balance, experience more of that balance?

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LP: I am one of the people pushing back on this notion. Look, I think things are going to be a little bit more fluid, but I don't buy it that all these companies are going to let everybody work from home. I think it will in the next couple of years, but I think once one salesperson is goes back to the workplace, they're all going to go back, right? Once one company brings everybody back, everybody —

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FT: Yeah. We're not going to be going on Zoom calls all day. Like once some of the workforce goes back, you're right, that there's going to be FOMO.

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LP: I heard one salesguy say, "Once my competitor gets on a plane, I'm on a plane because I want to compete." I think it will not be quite as dramatic as we think. Certainly, there will be change, but something I think that's really important to acknowledge is, this is not what working from home looks like. Working from home for you did not mean homeschooling your kids at the same time or overseeing remote school. The Canadian government actually came out with a statement that I saw was so beautiful at the beginning of COVID and they said, "This is not working from home. This is surviving a crisis at home while trying to work." So there's a very, very big difference. Once kids are back in school, once services are available, once public transportation is up and running, I think things look a lot different.

That said, I do think there's going to be more flexibility. I think people will give more thought to things like meetings and travel. But one thing that I think gets overlooked sometimes and it's really what I'm hearing from companies is the mental health piece of the this and the isolation is really dramatic. Companies are incredibly worried about burnout, and I often specialize in the early career end of the market. There's a real myth that young people want to work from home because they have mind screens, and they want to be flexible. Yes, they want to be flexible, but work is social, work is where you make friends and meet people. It's actually a lot of younger people who are really eager to get back to the workplace because they've very isolated right now. I think burnout and isolation are really big concerns of companies, and that more than anything else might push them to encourage people back to the office. But we'll see how it goes, but I think this idea that we're all going to be working from home is not going to play out.

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FT: That's fair. I kind of appreciate that a lot actually. I think, man, I mean I can't wait to be able to put on like a blazer, some heels. I want to be like that 9:00 to 5:00 woman again for just a little bit.

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LP: Amen. That's what I want too on the days when I feel like my hair looks good. What I would add is, I used to hear so much pushback from companies that we can't let anyone work from home because nothing will get done. What I think has gone away or I hope has gone away is this idea that people aren't really working when they're at home. My hope is, that all those naysayers against remote work or flexibility will sort of realize that this can happen, so I'm hoping there will be more flexibility. Maybe not more total remote work, but more understanding that when people do need to be not in the office that work can still get done.

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FT: Yes. What are you most looking forward to?

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LP: Mer personally? Oh my gosh!

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FT: Yes. I mean, getting on the stage, obviously number one. Earlier in the podcast, you talked about how you sort of had to rethink your revenue streams. Is there something that might even take over now that you've gotten some experience maybe doing something different in these last 12 months?

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LP: Yes. I am definitely launching e-courses, an online offering, because I miss being on stages, I miss restaurants so much, I miss Broadway shows, I miss bumping into people on the street so much in New York City. What I do not miss is travel, nonstop business travel. So to me, — I actually sometimes say COVID is my fault because my New Year's resolution in 2020 was to travel, so I got my wish in around a bad way. I think it's really how do we go back in new ways so that the grind of business travel and the grind of commuting don't come back, but the sort of positives of in-person come back more. I'm looking for more of a balance between in-person speaking, which I love and will always love, but more online courses. Because you know, the other piece is, I think we've learned about who we like. I don't know about you, but when I lead online courses, I love the chat, I was watching the conversation in the chat and you don't get that in person. I would love to have more of a balance between the sort of the COVID presenting and then back to the in-person that I love to.

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FT: Well, Lindsey, thank you so much for putting together this book in a pandemic, no less. You've been very busy, sort of like the elephant in the room. You're like, "So what have you been doing in the last year?" Like you've been writing this incredible book, giving us all some great strategy and insight into the future of work. Everybody the book is called, *Recalculating: Navigate Your Career Through the Changing World of Work*. Lindsey Pollak, thanks.

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LP: Thank you so much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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FT: Thanks again to Lindsey for joining us. Check out her book, *Recalculating: Navigate Your Career Through the Changing World of Work*. And you can learn more about Lindsey at lindseypollak.com. All the links are on the So Money podcast website. While you're there, click on Ask Farnoosh and share a question for our Friday episode of Ask Farnoosh. I'm here to help.

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Thanks for tuning in everybody. We'll see you back here on Wednesday when our guest is financial expert, Brittany Ross on how she got out of hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of debt. Don't miss that one. I hope your day is so money

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