

# *50 Ways To Act Like A Pro*

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What is **ACTing Like a Pro**?

50 Ways to **ACT Like a Pro**

What Does **ACTing Like a Pro** Mean to  
You?



AUBREY COACHING & TRAINING  
Facilitating Progress, Navigating Change



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Are you ready to  
***ACT like a pro?***

## **What is *ACTing Like a Pro*?**

Careers don't always go the way they are supposed to, or at least it sometimes seems that way. Really frustrating, right? But let's be honest, did you really think your professional progress would always be 'straight up'? Yeah right! That's a drink order not a career path, friend.

Yes, rather than experiencing the straight line, the linear trajectory 'straight to the top', it can feel as though we've fallen off the career ladder or at least that there is a rung missing! That's okay! The whole career path notion we might have bought into during our 20's is just a bill of goods. The straight line to the top isn't real, but don't be discouraged, rather, take heart and take heed. The truth is that success isn't ever a straight line, it's not a rocket ship we board the day we graduate and never get off until we 'arrive'. How boring would it be to ride one ship for forty or fifty years anyway? Career trajectories wind, the roads bend, and sometimes we even get stuck in the muck. But none of that means we're not growing or progressing. Often, the times we are most stuck are the times we are closest to the breakthrough we genuinely want!

## **The times we are most stuck are the times we are closet to the breakthrough we genuinely want!**

For a lot of mid career professionals the questions in life aren't (only) about success, life balance, making money, or handling a host of personal obligations, although all of these are relevant. No, there's something different. About the time you hit the point where you're experienced enough to have had success but aren't anywhere close to retirement is when you start to question things like 'What's my purpose here?' and 'What's the point of my job?' and 'Am I happy?' These questions are truly important. It's about wonder.

## **It's about wonder.**

If you're wondering what they heck you're really doing where you are, it's about time to do something about it. But what????



I get it! I really do – you have responsibilities, you need the money that your job pays you, you have bills, and kids, and payments, and you may even have some ego about the position you hold (even if you don't like it – more on this later!). Nope, you can't just drop everything and start a new business or wish an amazing new job into your life and then sit around 'manifesting' until it shows up, right? True, however, there are things you have control over right now that will lead you to the life's work you seek. I'd like to offer you a few suggestions that will help you turn your ideas and goals into awesomeness. How? By **ACTing like a pro.**

## **Start today and *ACT Like a Pro!***

The letters A – C – T have a lot of meaning for me. First A.C.T. stands for Aubrey Coaching & Training, my leadership development company. ACT also works as a verb to encourage and challenge executive coaching clients toward action and implementation, and finally **ACT Like a Pro** has become my moniker for helping executives own their space and harness the professional life they desire. The idea for **ACT Like A Pro** stems partly from the concept of 'going pro' introduced to me several years ago in author Steven Pressfield's work "Turning Pro, Tap Your Inner Power and Create Your Life's Work". Pressfield's book is a scant 130 pages that are more like daily lessons or musings. He advocates adopting a practice that is deceptively simple – own anything you are doing with passion and adopt habits that lead you forward verses keeping you stuck as an amateur. Pressfield wrote: "An amateur has amateur habits. A professional has professional habits."

Well, duh, Steve!

Yes, its simple but if we want to own a space or be awesome, why is it that we simply don't just 'go pro' or just 'act' like it? If you knew that you might not be reading this e-book! The answer often is locked away in a very handy place that can be deceptively hard to get to – you.



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Oh that self-reflection. Ugg. I know, but really working on the business often starts with working on you. It might sound frou-frou, but if all the opportunities, corporate trainings, chats (and gripe-sessions) with friends, the tears, dread, and down right anger haven't helped you get off center, why not try exploring the vast place living inside yourself? Why not spend time building the business or up-leveling your career by working on the builder herself – you! I'll give you an example; let me tell you my story.

## **How (and Why) I '*Went Pro*'**

By 2013, I'd been in business for myself a nice round decade. Much of my early work related to doing strategic planning sessions for cooperatives, boards, and committees as they worked through change or launched a new organization. Its work I still enjoy today. Along about 2007, I was leading a group and we had just finished a shiny new strategic plan. I was pretty proud of it and the group seemed enthused, too. At the roll out meeting, one of committee members had an idea – he wanted to pursue a grant to fund the next step. He said: 'Sarah, you're a writer, why don't you just fill this thing out?' Well, I had never written a grant and didn't really want to start. Grant writers brought to mind the image of a stodgy librarian with a messy gray bun and a lack of fashion sense – not how I saw myself! However, I was young and ambitious and figured 'how hard could it be?' So, I put the grant together.





***#ACTlikeapro***

We didn't win it.

The curious and competitive person in me decided to ask why and with a little education, I applied for the group's next grant in 2008 and we won. Surprisingly, more people heard about 'Sarah Aubrey, grant writer and they started calling. (how did that happen?). Suddenly, it was a business.

## **Suddenly, I had a business I never even wanted to start!**

In 2009, I wrote about 50 or 60 grants. By myself. Oh boy, I was going nuts and never leaving my little guest room/home office. By 2010, I had some part time help (aka intern) and wrote well over 100. As things naturally take their course, I added staff, contractors, more interns, certifications, training, webinars, an advisory board, new customers, speaking engagements –you name it. Most importantly, we were winning grants for clients.

All was well, right?

Unfortunately not. I harbored a shameful little secret – I didn't even like my company and I didn't want to write grants. As the business grew and became more successful, I kept at it, plying myself with wine and online shopping, the little trinkets I promised myself as carrot and reward for doing work that was slowly eviscerating my creative soul.

By 2011 and definitely into 2012, I started getting offers from people to 'come join them' or 'just bring your grant business in and come work for us!' I wasn't impressed with these offers to take my lucrative business and turn me into an employee, but it did set me to thinking. Could I actually do something else? The thought was tantalizing, but every time I let myself think more about speaking, writing, and consulting on something other than grants, a nasty little mignon on my shoulder leaned in and told me some ugly lies. He said 'you're ungrateful' and 'who do you think you are' and 'from what you came from, you ought to just be glad you have this' or 'why would you throw away what you've accomplished?' and worst of all 'what if you can't make a living doing something else?'

But I did.

So, as you must know by now, I no longer write 100 grants a year alone in my guest room. So how did I get past all the self-talk and **ACT Like a Pro**? Well, it took some help to stop playing the old records; I was raised to clean your plate and be glad you had it to eat. I felt as though walking away from the grant company meant I was throwing away good things. But the day someone introduced me as 'The Grant Lady' it all changed. I'd had enough.

**That realization struck me so hard that I did something. I hired my own executive coach.**



I was on deck to speak when the person doing my introduction gleefully welcomed me to the stage as 'Sarah Aubrey, the Grant Lady!' I froze and I am sure I scowled. Recovering, I stumbled to the platform amid thoughts of Dana Carvey's 'The Church Lady' Saturday night skit floating in my head. After the session, when a handful of people called me 'The Grant Lady' in good fun I had to restrain myself from punching them. Then, I got an email from a current client referring me to someone with the subject line 'the grant lady'. I felt like I was reading words already embedded on my epitaph - and that wasn't how I wanted to be known.

## **The day someone introduced me as 'The Grant Lady' it all changed. I'd had enough.**

To be known for something that was lucrative but I didn't even believe in- yikes-that's what it took. That realization struck me so hard that I did something. I hired my own executive coach and through the process, I began to make small changes and add new options to my services line up. Still, I wasn't making big leaps until my coach said something to me that rocked my core. She said: Sarah, did you ever consider that you built a successful business that you're the wrong person to run? What????

## **Sarah, did you ever consider that you built a successful business that you're the wrong person to run?**

I had to sit down as my knees literally gave out.

Thunderstruck.

She was right. I had so much 'ego' in the business I'd built and so much fear that I 'couldn't do it again' that I was afraid of not being 'somebody' or of not having that money I'd been making. Even though I didn't love the title or even love the company,

I did have some comfort with being 'just okay enough' and it prevented me from doing something unknown that I wanted to try.

## **I had to sit down as my knees literally gave out.**

So, what's the moral of this story? I shared it because I want you to know that sometimes it is hard to see the forest for the trees. We can be so caught up in our 'shoulds' that we opt to just ignore our 'coulds'. I also want to point out that when we take a new action - in the case of my story - I hired an executive coach - we look at business and professional goals through a clean lens. She pushed me to ask myself why I couldn't just start working toward something different even as I had client obligations, contractors to pay, a lifestyle I had become accustomed to fund, and any other (legitimate!) B.S. that I'd been forcing myself to use as an excuse. When I removed the 'I can't because' statement in front of every sentence and replaced it with 'I could start today', I changed.

## **When I removed the 'I can't because' statement in front of every sentence and replaced it with 'I could start today by', I changed.**

You've got to start taking stock and making concrete decisions. Then test them out and alter as you need to along the way. Below I'd like to share just a handful of ideas to get your creativity going and your energy flowing.



# 50 Ways To *Act Like A Pro*

- 1 Set aside time, even once a week, to plan your next move. Be diligent about the goals you create.
- 2 Plan a strategy day, just for you, away from the home or office.
- 3 Leave the office early and think, just think, without judgment about what you really aim to achieve.
- 4 Pros have passion. Find your outlet for it.
- 5 Ask for something you deserve at work. Be polite but be firm, have examples of why you've earned it ready!
- 6 Plan your day in the am and review it in the pm. What went well? What do you want to change?
- 7 Research the project, the hobby, or the business you've been thinking about. Make a few calls and go look at examples of businesses that are similar to what you'd like to create.
- 8 Go meet with somebody doing what you'd like to do. Scratch that, go meet with three people!
- 9 Get a mentor.
- 10 Go to events completely outside your network. Skip one boring conference this year and attend something totally different!



# 50 Ways To *Act Like A Pro*

11

Ditch some people that don't fit in your life anymore.

12

Ditch some negative baggage that you don't need, especially negative self-talk! .

13

Develop a practice, a ritual, or a set of norms that give you time to work toward turning into a pro.

14

Make the simple pros and cons list, act on at least 2 or 3 of them this week. Then decide when you'll do more.

15

Go back to school.

16

Take an online course - or several.

17

Teach a course in an area of your expertise either online, at a college, or at a local public school.

18

Hire an executive coach!

19

Join a peer group.

20

Take a leave of absence.



# 50 Ways To *Act Like A Pro*

21

Sell things, pay off debt, and plan for the financial freedom you need to create the life or business you want.

22

Strive to enjoy some part of what you are doing now. Find a way to make the time you're using right now more valuable.

23

Take a skills or personality assessment like Strengths Finder <sup>™</sup> and share it with those who matter in your life.

24

Make a timeline to commit to your career change, make it reasonable and set daily steps.

25

Read: be educated-be informed-be enlightened.

26

Stop reading junk!

27

Limit the time you spend doing mindless things –invest your 'down time' on something that you actually want to do. What a concept!

28

Take yourself out to dinner.

29

Find an accountability partner and create goals together and share them with each other.

30

Use paper and send hand written notes of thanks, congrats, and encouragement. Style stands out!



# 50 Ways To *Act Like A Pro*

**31** Dump clubs that are boring, feel overwhelming, or that you're not enjoying anymore.

**32** Quit organizations where you're a member in name only but not giving your all.

**33** Find a new group that is completely outside your professional box and have fun getting to know executives that are different than you!

**34** Do you remember how to have fun in your career? If not, make time to figure it out.

**35** Do a 360-degree assessment with your employees, supervisors, and peers. Then, take action on some of the recommendations.

**36** Invest in the piece of equipment, the class, the training, or anything you need that will move your career or company forward.

**37** Have a hard conversation or a bold conversation with your supervisor about where you want to go next.

**38** Update your professional look. Consider business cards, stationary, a website refresh or even hair and wardrobe.

**39** Practice doing what you want to be doing. If you're a writer, write. If you build things, build them. If you're great at selling, get out there and sell.

**40** Ask why you want to do what you want to do. There is no right or wrong answer but if you can't articulate it you can't go for it!



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41

Go back through your high school yearbook, your old awards or your old letters. Is there anything there that points to what you really want now? Did you leave something behind that you loved that you could still do today?

42

Talk to the person closest to you about the goals you have. Stop being afraid to say them out loud.

43

Who is the best in your field? Go be better than her. Then, be better than yourself.

44

Take time to study your strengths and best assets. Use them like a maniac.

45

Change your style from negative to positive. Adopt gratitude not grouchiness.

46

Get professional photos taken and update your social media profiles.

47

Create a free website or blog to share your thought leadership with the world-maybe it will become more!

48

Update your resume and send it in for an interesting job opportunity – even if you're not exactly looking. Interviewing is excellent for challenging yourself.

49

Call someone you'd like to get to know. Skip the standard Starbucks invite and instead take them to an elegant lunch.

50

Define what ACTing pro means for you then start – today.



# What Does *ACTing Like a Pro* Mean for you?

If you've read to the end of this e-book, I am guessing you're on the hunt for a change, a refresh, or a new level in your career or business.

Now is the time to make the move. So, what to do first? Well, that's up to you. Consider the handful of tips above and let me know on the blog at [www.sarahbethaubrey.com](http://www.sarahbethaubrey.com) how *ACTing Like a Pro* is going for you. The bottom line is that pros put in the time, determination, and sweat equity to get out of the comfortable good to achieve the extraordinary in life and work.

## Are You Ready To *ACT Like A Pro*?







Sarah Beth Aubrey is the founder of A.C.T., Aubrey Coaching & Training, a leadership development organization with the mission to help professionals facilitate progress and navigate change. She believes everyone has a unique definition of success and strives to foster that potential whether through one-on-one executive coaching, by facilitating peer groups, or by leading boards through change-based planning initiatives. An entrepreneur since 2003, in 2015 she founded A.C.T., Aubrey Coaching & Training, a performance-based leadership training and executive coaching firm. She was recently awarded the Indianapolis Start-Up Ladies/Women of Skyline Club Transformative Leadership Award for excellence in executive coaching. To book Sarah Beth to speak or to subscribe to her blog, get connected at [www.sarahbethaubrey.com](http://www.sarahbethaubrey.com)

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