

Turning Pro by Steven Pressfield

A Summary for Ken McElroy's Inner Circle Book Club

The central thesis of "Turning Pro" is that what we are frequently held back from living our full potential by walking through life as an amateur. According to author Steven Pressfield, the solution to this dilemma is that we turn pro. As Pressfield goes on to explain, the chief difference between an amateur and a pro is their habits.

Turning pro requires that we give up the comfort of being an amateur and embrace a new mindset. Fear, shame, and addictions usually conspire to prevent us from turning pro, and our "shadow career" can impede us. The majority of us live through what Pressfield refers to as "repetition without progress" which yields "incapacity as a payoff."

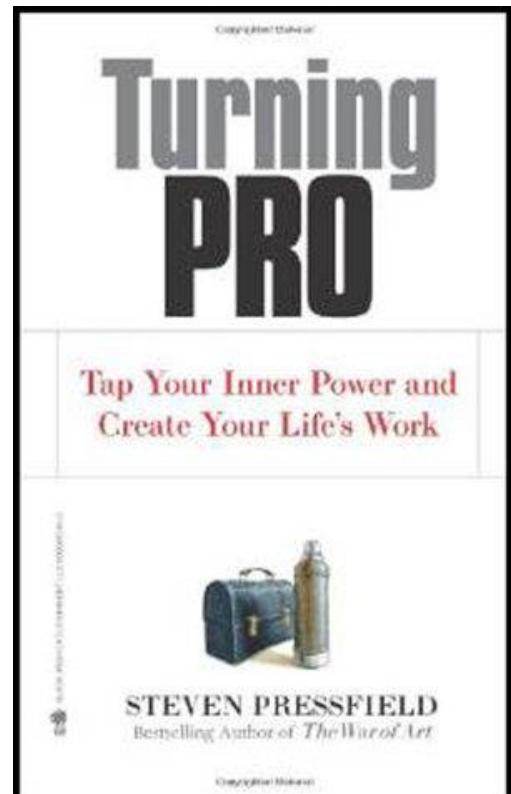
The "shadow career" or "shadow professions" that Pressfield refers to are the professional roles we take on that aren't our actual calling. Typically, shadow careers are something that seems safer than the unknown of doing something that elicits real passion. Shadow professions are the cornerstone of shadow lives, which Pressfield says are defined by confinement and feeling detached from one's passion and purpose.

Characteristics of the Amateur

When we're living as an amateur, we're fleeing from our calling. All too often, amateurs fall into addiction. Addiction of course goes beyond drugs and alcohol. The addiction can be to sex, shopping, gambling, or anything to numb one's feelings.

The transformation from an amateur to a pro is largely internal. The inner life of the amateur is characterized by fear. Very often, amateurs can have two opposing fears simultaneously: they can be fearful of success *and* failure. They can fear visibility *and* obscurity. The amateur is basically living outside of themselves, basing their own worth on the perceived opinion of others.

The amateur is easily distracted because they live in fear of the isolation and quiet that's necessary once they decide to turn pro. Instead, amateurs prefer instant gratification and tend to become jealous of others' successes while beating up on themselves for not



being farther along in their pursuits. While the pro drives themselves, the amateur is seeking external permission to achieve their goals. This is symptomatic of the amateurs' larger pattern of giving their power away to others.

What is Turning Pro?

Turning Pro is a choice, usually one that's embraced after avoiding it for a long time. When you turn pro, your relationship to your goals versus the outside world flips. Whereas amateurs avoid their inner life and are extremely invested in other people's actions and opinions, once you turn pro, your inner life and goals become your focus while the words and deeds of others become less consequential.

When you turn pro, you still have fears, perhaps even more so than when you were operating as an amateur. Eventually the fears will dissipate as the pro continues to take action. The pro's life becomes infused with a simplicity because they now able to recognize that long-ignored dream as a calling. Once you've turned pro, the way you spend your time will change. Your day is no longer about escaping fear, but confronting it through actions you'd resisted when you were living as an amateur.

Characteristics of the Pro

Once you've started facing the fears that had kept you from turning pro, you will become courageous in other areas of your life. You won't live or die by other people's opinions or actions.

The professional also isn't waiting for inspiration, they know that actions lead to inspiration. Professionals create their own "practice." Here we use the word practice in the sense of a yoga or martial arts practice. This type of practice is defined by a routine that helps the pro maintain responsibility for their progress while connecting to higher inspiration, whether that's from their own psyche, a muse or a higher power.

Developing a practice and creating your own space for it is key. That can be someplace in your home, a separate space that you rent, or a public place that you consistently use for your practice.

Pros have let certain habits and relationships that fall by the wayside that no longer serve them. By pursuing their goals consistently, they have tapped into a vitality that makes their lives bolder and more energetic. They are on a path defined by breakthroughs and expansion.