

# Creating A Joyful Planet: How Russell Steiner is Helping



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Patrice Tanaka, Founder & Chief Joy Officer of [Joyful Planet LLC](#), interviews people who are actively living their purpose and contributing to a more joyful planet. This interview spotlights [Russell Steiner](#), Customer Happiness Manager (love his title!) at [Urban Stems](#), a fan favorite for stunningly designed floral bouquets, starting at \$35 with no delivery charge and available in urban and suburban areas, including Washington D.C., New York City and Baltimore.

**PT:** Russell, what I love and admire about you is how you're pursuing your passion and living your purpose in both your personal and professional life, including through your job as Customer Happiness Manager at Urban Stems, a start-up, flower delivery service whose stated goal is "to make the world a happier place." I love the ethos of your company and your title! And, you live up to it beautifully. Russell, you were the third employee hired by your company to be a brand ambassador, ensuring customer satisfaction/happiness, communicating with them via various touchpoints – phone,

email, live chat and social media – and also providing courier support, among other duties. Can you share your life's purpose, which I know we both define as one that leverages your greatest talents, expertise and passion in service of people and planet?



Russell Steiner  
Customer Happiness  
Manager, Urban  
Stems

**RS:** My life purpose from my earliest years revolved around building connections and positivity with others. This has always created a wealth of fulfillment for me.

**PT:** When did you discover your life's purpose? Was there a triggering incident?

**RS:** I'm not sure whether there was a defining event or if my purpose was molded over time through a series of key moments. From the earliest age though, building connections and positivity with others has always created a wealth of fulfillment for me.

With my passion for people in mind, a pivotal experience in finding my purpose was when I decided to quit my first job after college as a Technical Recruiter within two weeks. Before I accepted the position, I thought I would get the

chance to connect with many new people through interviewing. Unfortunately, that last part was as idealistic as it was untrue.

The truth is that recruiting is a sales job. I was encouraged to evaluate each resume as a potential for commission; a mere statistics game without much humanity to it. I asked my then boss, "What if the same receptionist I just spoke with to inquire about the name of an employee in his/her company I'm interested in head hunting picks up when I call back to ask for that person?" He said, "Don't use your real name. Just make one up – maybe use your best friend's name." That was me being told to lie on my second day in the working world. I was doing my job as long as I was making 60 cold calls a day and submitting as many resumes to as many job openings as possible. After two weeks, I politely quit and explained I didn't believe I was a good fit with his company.

The discovery here was not what my purpose was, but what it definitely wasn't. My purpose wasn't about selling or making big money or having a grand title. My purpose was about building genuine and fulfilling relationships with others, but I needed the right environment for those values to flourish.

**PT: And once you determined your purpose did you find yourself begin to actively live it? How did you begin? What did you do?**



Russell Steiner and colleagues at Urban Stems

**RS:** It all fell into place perfectly. Fifty percent of life is you acting upon the world and the other 50 percent is letting the world act upon you, because we can't control everything. I made the decision to take a risk, quit my job, and find something new and let the world decide what would be sent my way.

I met Urban Stems co-founder, Ajay Kori, playing board games at a bar in D.C. just a week after quitting my job. He took the time to get to know who I was. I told him about my compromised first job experience. He commended my moral fiber. A new and bright connection was made.

He told me how most people spend their lives unhappy at work and that his company was building something special, where culture took priority. A culture of happiness and fun, which laid the foundation for a business that empowered gifting flowers to others.

It was a sincere, earnest, and sound description of work, which was centered on the happiness of others. Ajay mentioned

they would be hiring for their New York City launch soon and to follow up if I was interested. It was too perfect. This was a moment the world was reaching out to me by making a positive connection.

**PT: Did knowing your purpose in life change what you do in your professional life in any way? And, in your personal life?**

**RS:** It unquestionably did. Once I found something that aligned with my values, especially at a seven-month old startup, I began investing all my energies into building something amazing. I was doing it almost around the clock, but you barely notice the time go by when the work is meaningful.

We had no funding. Not much as far as compensation. Titles didn't matter. It went against pretty much everything I had learned before entering the work world, which was a good thing, because nothing is more important than one's values. The only thing that mattered was being with a great, well-intentioned group, which, at the time, was just seven other people split between D.C. and New York, and solely focusing on growing this incredible experience of "inspiring delight." Our hashtag is #SendHappy and I've always thought that pretty much summed up our mission: helping spread happiness to other people.

**PT: How does it feel to be living your life's purpose? Specifically, how would you describe it in terms of the success, fulfillment and joy you experience?**

**RS:** It is extremely humbling. I am lucky to be happy in what I do every day. Lucky that I love to work non-stop for a company that brings so much joy to others, especially being on the customer side, where I get a first-hand account of the smiles we create every day.

The smiles are evidence that what I've spent my time doing the past two years has been beyond worthwhile. I care about others and leading them in the right direction, which is imperative to helping make someone's day special. With that in mind, I

have zero regrets about quitting a job that had no meaning at all.

When you look forward to contributing to something meaningful every day it's hard not to consider that being success.

**PT: What is the result of knowing and actively living your life's purpose? Is there a power that comes from knowing your life's purpose in being able to actively live it?**

**RS:** When your life has meaning, you feel actualized on the inside, which spreads to the outside.

There have been many people who have questioned my undying positive energy, outlook, and enthusiasm for the world. It seems almost alien to them, but I think that's because most people go along with or convince themselves to make decisions that don't align with who they really are.

I know my attitude has been a positive source for others and can often have a domino effect. When people are happy it tends to spread to the next person. Our SendHappy experience engages so many people who receive flowers to become senders, which really reflects that contagious notion of positivity spreading from one person to the next.

When you start living your life in a good way, it only makes it better for those around you.

**PT: What are your greatest hopes and dreams for the life purpose you have chosen?**

**RS:** To lead together with others in the right direction. To contribute to groups of people who bring out the best in one another. We all have amazing, unique talents and traits to share with one another, and there's no reason not to use them to better the world in some way. Doing things together with other people and for other people is one of the more worthwhile experiences of being human.

**PT: What do you think you would be doing now if you hadn't determined and then actively begun to live your purpose?**

**RS:** I would probably have a very cynically negative outlook on life. I might be cold calling sales prospects and waiting for 5:00 p.m. to roll around every day, where every minute seemed like a lifetime, because there would be nothing meaningful fueling my existence. I wouldn't have the same positive outlook, because I'd be upset with myself for continuing to lead my life in a way that did not align with my values.

**PT: How important is it for individuals to discover their life's purpose? And, do you think that businesses would be wise to help employees discover their purpose?**

**RS:** It is extremely important to do something that gives your life meaning. And to contribute in ways that makes things better for others while also bettering you in the process. Ultimately, to be able to grow through your service to others.

I believe a company needs to make sure their employees are gaining fulfillment, which is something Urban Stems cares deeply about. We always want one other to be learning and that, much like sending flowers to someone, is a gift. Everyone has the opportunity to wear multiple hats and contribute in so many ways. To be part of a business that is designed to make people's days is truly amazing. Our employees are even subsidized to take General Assembly classes of their choosing, which is a great way to support what they're interested in and what they care about.

If you're not delivering meaning to your employees then you're not aligning with their values. This will ultimately result in a poor business for all stakeholders. Your bottom line will always look better when the experience has meaning for those creating it.

**PT: What advice would you give others about discovering their**

## Life's purpose?

**RS:** Take a balanced approach. Make sure you're doing, but also make sure you're letting things happen, too. It's important not to force things. Patience is key!

Drop your ego, because caring only about yourself won't get you anywhere with others or get you more fulfillment from the world. Other people are necessary to our own happiness, so be someone's cheerleader as much as you can. Many of us need the support of others and most have a tough time so take the time to pay someone a compliment about how nice they look or what a great job they're doing. When you're a light for someone else it sparks a domino effect of brightness.

Finally, be true to yourself. Don't do something you don't want to do. Years go by too quickly to waste any time not growing as a person. When you're doing something right for yourself, you're doing something right for the people around you, too.

**About the Author:** *Patrice Tanaka is a serial entrepreneur, having co-founded three award-winning, PR & marketing firms and, most recently, Joyful Planet, a Business & Life Strategy Consultancy. "Through Joyful Planet, I am doing what I love and do best, leveraging my creative, problem-solving talent to help individuals and organizations discover and live their purpose and unleash greater success, fulfillment and joy in business and life," says Patrice. This is the subject of Patrice's new best-selling book, Beat the Curve, co-authored with world renowned management consultant and coach, Brian Tracy, and other business leaders. Her chapter is entitled, "Live Your Life's Purpose and Unleash Your Joy." Connect with Patrice@JoyfulPlanet.com and via LinkedIn/Patrice Tanaka and Twitter/Patrice Tanaka.*