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# FORTUNE

## “The Practical Painter”



Here’s one of the few good things to be said about having a really bad boss: He might just spur you to change careers. Ann Rea studied fine arts in college but then went on to pursue a career in IT project management because it wasn’t practical. “I didn’t paint or draw for many years,” she says now, “and I was miserable.”

Then, in 2000, while working as a project management consultant and living in Davis, California, she met pop artist Wayne Thiebaud, who urged her to pick up her brush again. “I started researching how to market art,” says Rea. “You have to make a marketing plan and carve out your own niche.” At the same time “I moved to another project management job with a terrible boss, a real jerk-and that’s what motivated me to try to make a living as a painter.”

She moved to San Francisco “with no idea of what I was going to live on” and started calling on Napa and Sonoma wineries. People like her paintings of vine-covered hills (see [annrea.com](http://annrea.com)), so she proposed to winemakers that they sell reproductions in their tasting rooms. From spring through fall, Rea sells the originals, priced from \$1300-\$3000, at wine tasting events. The business has been profitable since 2005.

“Originally I planned to do something like this when I retired, but I didn’t want to wait that long. Who knows what could happen between not and then?” says Rea. “If there’s something you really want to do, do it now.”

Anne Fisher, May 2007