

SO GOOD THEY CAN'T IGNORE YOU

Why Skills Triumph Passion in the Quest for Work You Love

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MAIN IDEA

Why do some people create successful, enjoyable and meaningful lives and careers while so many others do not?

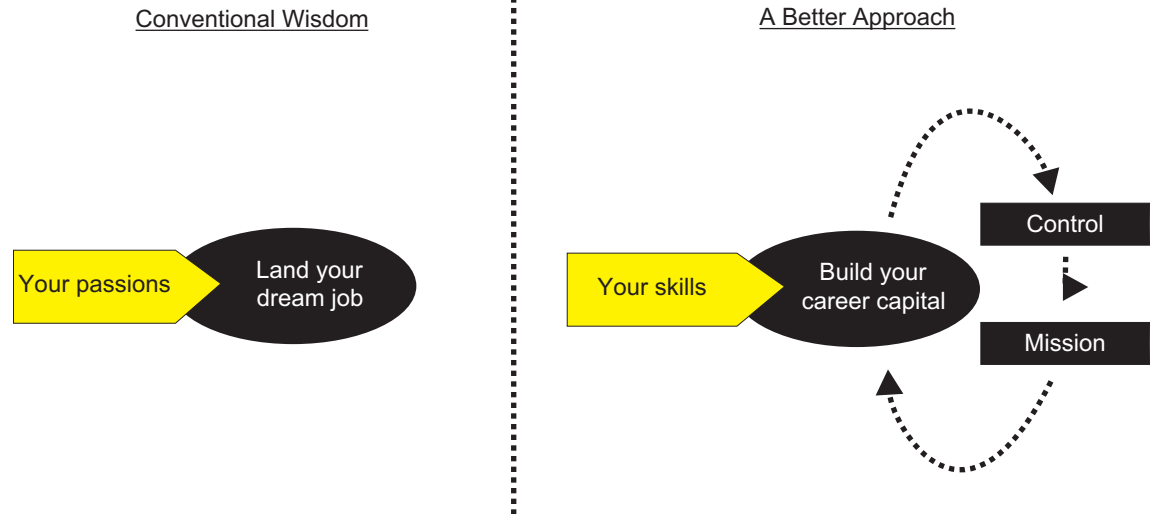
According to the popular cliché, the key to success is to “follow your passion” – that is, to do what you love and the money will just naturally flow to you in some mysterious way. The only problem with that idea is when you’re first getting started, this is impractical. People hire you to perform a task they’re willing to pay you to do. Whether you love it or not and whether you’re following your passion or not is irrelevant.

Instead of going on a quest to find work which matches your passions, get busy building career capital. Once you have a reservoir of career capital in place, you can then use some of that capital to get control over what you do and to do stuff that’s important. That’s the smart way to build a fulfilling career.

Instead of trying to find work you’re genuinely passionate about, focus on being so good they can’t ignore you.

“The conventional wisdom on career success—follow your passion—is seriously flawed. It not only fails to describe how most people actually end up with compelling careers, but for many people it can actually make things worse: leading to chronic job shifting and unrelenting angst when one’s reality inevitably falls short of the dream. Working right trumps finding the right work— it’s a simple idea, but it’s also incredibly subversive, as it overturns decades of folk career advice all focused on the mystical value of passion. It wrenches us away from our daydreams of an overnight transformation into instant job bliss and provides instead a more sober way toward fulfillment. It’s my hope that the insights that follow will free you from simplistic catchphrases like “follow your passion” and “do what you love”— the type of catchphrases that have helped spawn the career confusion that afflicts so many today— and instead, provide you with a realistic path toward a meaningful and engaging working life.

– Cal Newport



Rule #1 – Don't follow your passions Page 2

Most people have been told all their lives the key to occupational happiness is to match your job to your preexisting passions. That doesn't work in all but a few rare cases and if you subscribe to the passion hypothesis, you end up being unhappy for most of your career. Simply put “follow your passion” is bad advice.

Rule #2 – Be so good they can't ignore you – The importance of skill Pages 3 - 4

Instead of having a passion mindset (“what can the world offer me?”) build a craftsman mindset (“what great stuff can I offer the world?”). Become an absolute expert at what you do. Build up your reservoir of rare and valuable skills – your career capital – which you can use in the future to construct a career you love.

Rule #3 – Turn down a promotion – The importance of control Pages 5 - 6

One of the most defining characteristics of work you love is having control over what you do, how you do it and who you work alongside. Keep building your career capital until you have enough chips to cash in for autonomy. The key here is to apply the law of financial viability: “Do what people are willing to pay for.”

Rule #4 – Think small, act big – The importance of mission Pages 7 - 8

Once you have enough control or autonomy in place, you then find a unifying mission around which to build your life and career. If you try and do this before you have enough career capital, it will be unsustainable. Very few people get this right immediately so be prepared to make lots of little bets to explore possibilities until you come up with a compelling mission that’s you. Once you find your sense of mission, you can then start doing some remarkable and noteworthy things.

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