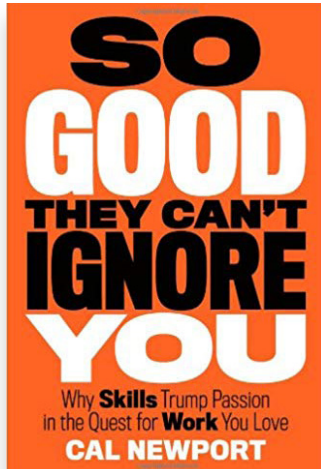


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

convenenow.com/executive-summaries



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cal Newport

Cal Newport, Ph.D., writes, teaches computer science, and runs a website.

So Good They Can't Ignore You

THE NUTSHELL

Grand Central Publishing/Hachette Book Group 2012

Introduction

When it comes to work you love, following your passion is not particularly useful advice. Not only is this conventional wisdom seriously flawed, but it can actually make things worse.

RULE #1: Don't Follow Your Passion

Chapter One: The "Passion" of Steve Jobs

Steve Jobs: "The only way to do great work is love what you do." But Apple was not born of passion—it was a "small-time" money-making scheme that unexpectedly took off.

Chapter Two: Passion is Rare

Compelling careers often have complex origins that reject the simple idea that all you have to do is follow your passion. Working right trumps finding the right work.

Chapter Three: Passion is Dangerous

The passion hypothesis is wrong and dangerous. Telling someone to "follow their passion" is not just innocent optimism, but potentially the foundation for a career riddled with confusion and angst.

So Good They Can't Ignore You

RULE #2: Be So Good They Can't Ignore You (Or, the Importance of Skill)

Chapter Four: The Clarity of the Craftsman

Actor and comedian Steve Martin's career advice: "Be so good they can't ignore you. If somebody's thinking, 'How can I be really good?' people are going to come to you."

Chapter Five: The Power of Career Capital

Great work requires rare and valuable skills to offer in return. Think of these rare and valuable skills you can offer as your "career capital."

Chapter Six: The Career Capitalists

Alex and Mike both focused on getting good—not finding their passion—and then used the career capital this generated to acquire the traits that made their careers compelling.

Chapter Seven: Becoming a Craftsman

10,000 hours is the magic number for expertise in a complex task. To successfully adopt the craftsman mindset, we have to approach our jobs with a dedication to *deliberate practice*.

RULE #3: Turn Down a Promotion (Or, the Importance of Control)

Chapter Eight: The Dream Job Elixir

Gaining *control* over what you do and how you do it is incredibly important. The freedom to live a meaningful life on your own terms increases happiness, engagement, and fulfillment.

Chapter Nine: The First Control Trap

The *first control trap* is trying to embrace control without career capital. You're likely to end up enjoying all the autonomy you can handle but unable to afford your next meal.

Chapter Ten: The Second Control Trap

The *second control trap* is when you have enough career capital to get meaningful control over your work but you're so valuable your current employer will try to prevent it.

So Good They Can't Ignore You

Chapter Eleven: Avoiding the Control Traps

Use money as a “neutral indicator of value” or a way of determining whether you have enough career capital to succeed. By aiming to make money, you’re aiming to be valuable.

RULE #4: Think Small, Act Big **(Or, the Importance of Mission)**

Chapter Twelve: The Meaningful Life of Pardis Sabeti

To have a mission is to have a unifying focus for your career. Plenty of people are good at what they do but haven’t reoriented their career in a compelling direction.

Chapter Thirteen: Missions Require Capital

Missions are tricky. Having passion for your work is vital, but it’s a fool’s errand to try to figure out in advance what work will lead to this passion.

Chapter Fourteen: Missions Require Little Bets

Many people can identify different potential missions for their work, but *few* actually build their career around such missions. An effective strategy is to proceed by making methodical increments.

Chapter Fifteen: Missions Require Marketing

By using *little bets* and *the law of remarkability*, you greatly increase your chances of finding ways to transform your mission from a compelling idea into a compelling career.

Conclusion

Working right trumps finding the right work. You don’t need a perfect job to find occupational happiness; you need instead a better approach to the work already available to you.