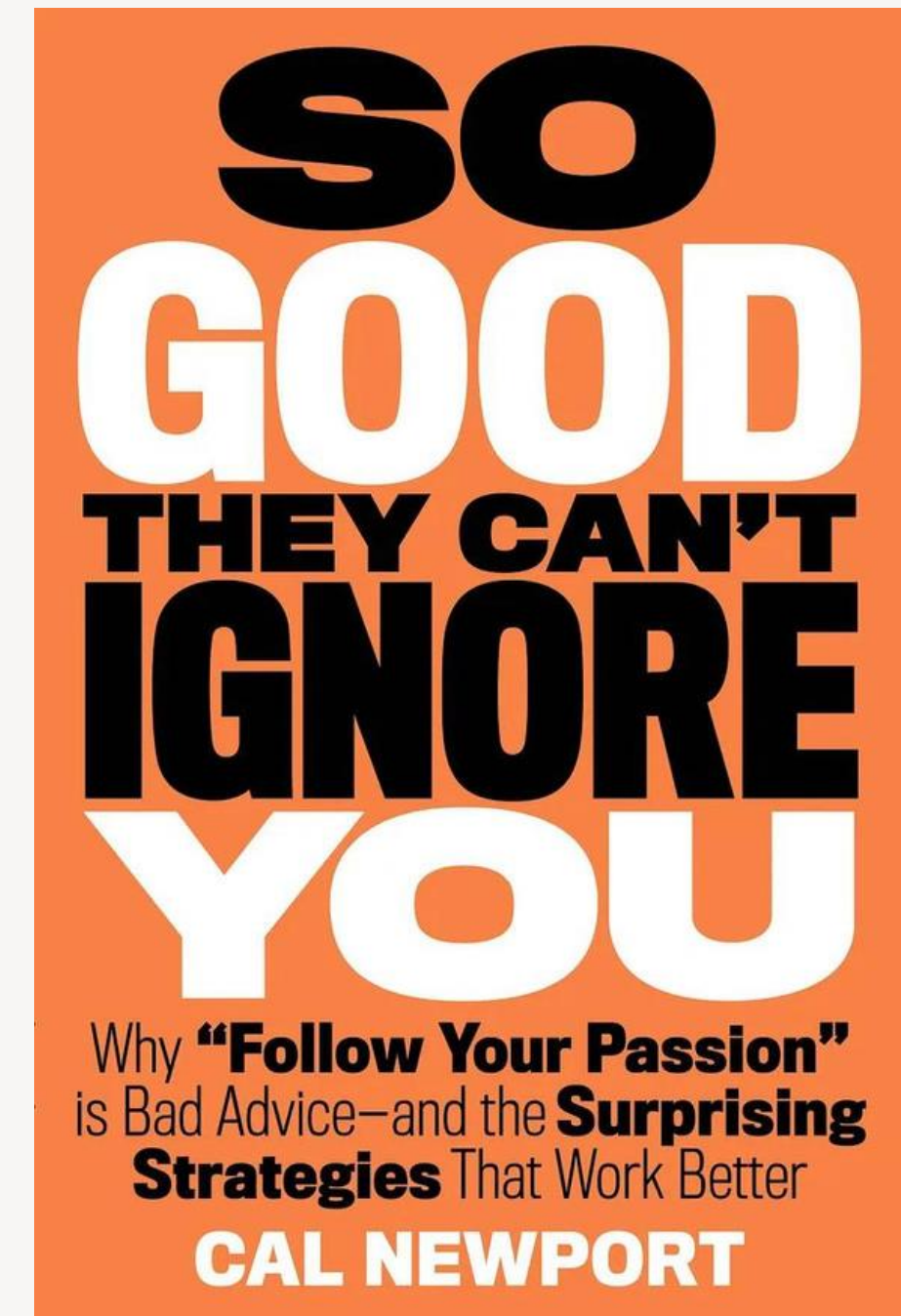




# From Mediocre to Exceptional

Insights from 'So Good They Can't Ignore You'

By: Mobin Kheibary





# Outline

- What to Expect?
  - **Introduction / Overview**
  - The passion hypothesis
  - The craftsman mindset
  - Automation and Autonomy
  - Having a 'mission' or a 'higher purpose'
  - Wrapping Up

# About The Author

## Computer Scientist & Bestselling Author

- Cal is an MIT-trained computer science professor at Georgetown University who also writes about the intersections of technology, work, and the quest to find depth in an increasingly distracted world.
- The Technology and Culture Trilogy
- Deep Life Movement



# Introduction

● Key Question:

Why do some people enjoy their work when so many other people don't?





# Core Ideas

**The passion  
hypothesis**

**The craftsman  
mindset**

**Automation and  
Autonomy**

**Having a 'mission'  
or a 'higher  
purpose'**





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# The Passion Hypothesis Sucks

The first idea is that ‘follow your passion’ is terrible career advice, and people who say this ~~should be shot~~ don't know what they're talking about.

- “ *The key to occupational happiness is to first figure out what you’re passionate about and then find a job that matches this passion.* ”



# What does the latest Research show?

- Conference Board survey of U.S. job satisfaction
- Canadian University Students [Hobby-related Passion vs. Career Related Passion]
- The number of years spent on the job

Research Says that  
Passion:

- **Is Rare**
- **Takes time to Develop**
- **Is a Consequence of Mastery**





## Why was this so?

Newport believes that Self Determination Theory holds the answer.

Self Determination Theory is the idea that your happiness is related to:

**Autonomy:** the feeling that you have control over your day, and that your actions are important.

**Competence:** the feeling that you are good at what you do.

**Relatedness:** the feeling of connection to other people.



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## “ Adopt the Craftsman Mindset

- The traits that define great work are rare and valuable. Specifically, desirable jobs are **creative**, allow you to create **large impact**, and **give you control** over your work and life.
- Consequently, supply and demand indicates that you need to offer **rare and valuable skills** in return. These rare and valuable skills are what Newport refers to as your **career capital**.
- This is why it trumps the passion mindset if your goal is to create work you love.







## “ Adapt to the Skill Market of Your Field

- The first idea is that there are two different kinds of skill markets: **winner-take-all markets**, and **auction markets**.
- **Winner-take-all markets** are markets where only one skill matters. Writers, standup artists and musicians belong to this category. These fields are ultimately dominated by proficiency in a small set of skills, so you're probably better off optimizing the skill that matters instead of doing incidental activities (like networking, etc.).
- **Auction markets**, on the other hand, are less structured. There are many different types of career capital here, and each person might generate a unique collection.



## Do Deliberate Practice

**Deliberate practice** is the practice of doing things that hurt — playing guitar pieces that are just above your skill level, practicing the tennis backhand that you suck at, studying chess positions you can barely get out of.

No other activity predicts world-class skill as powerfully as number of hours spent in deliberate practice.



Newport reduces this advice down to five steps...







## 5 Steps Towards Deliberate Practice

- **Decide what capital market you're in:**
  - If you're in a winner-takes-all market, just pick the skill that dominates. But if you're in auction market, pick from your currently available 'open gates'.
- **Define 'Good' & Clear Goals**
  - You'll have to decide what is 'good' for your particular career skill type.
- **Stretch & Destroy:**
  - push yourself into areas of discomfort.
- **Be patient:**
  - it is the patience of ignoring all the distractions that may come up in your pursuit of excellence. Deliberate practice takes diligence, and diligence implies time.



Looking for A simpler  
framework?  
Let's formulate it...







# A Simple, Yet Powerful Framework

1

## Mission

Unifying focus of your Career.

2

## Research

What is new in my field? What are the Big problems that need to be solved?

3

## Little Bets

Test out your ideas and get feedback.



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3

## Autonomy Means Avoiding Control Traps

1. If you seek autonomy in your current role before gaining enough career capital, you won't get the autonomy you seek. To put this simply: control demands capital.
2. Once you've gained sufficient career capital to seek control, the universe conspires to prevent you from gaining that control. Put simply: control benefits only you.



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# Finding Meaning

4

- Newport ends the book with what this argument: Finding a unifying mission to your working life *'can be a source of great satisfaction'*.
- **Mission is capital-driven.**
- **Great career missions require making little bets.**
- **Seth Godin's 'Purple Cow' [Being Remarkable, Unique and Interesting]**



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## Conclusion

# Recap & Last Words of Wisdom

Passion Mindset = What the world can offer me?

Craftsman Mindset = What I can offer the world?

Craftsmen Are:

- **Experts**
- **Respected in their field**
- **Autonomous**

We don't thrive when we are comfortable. We thrive when we overcome adversity. The person who becomes a master is one who has the tools to be able to live another day.

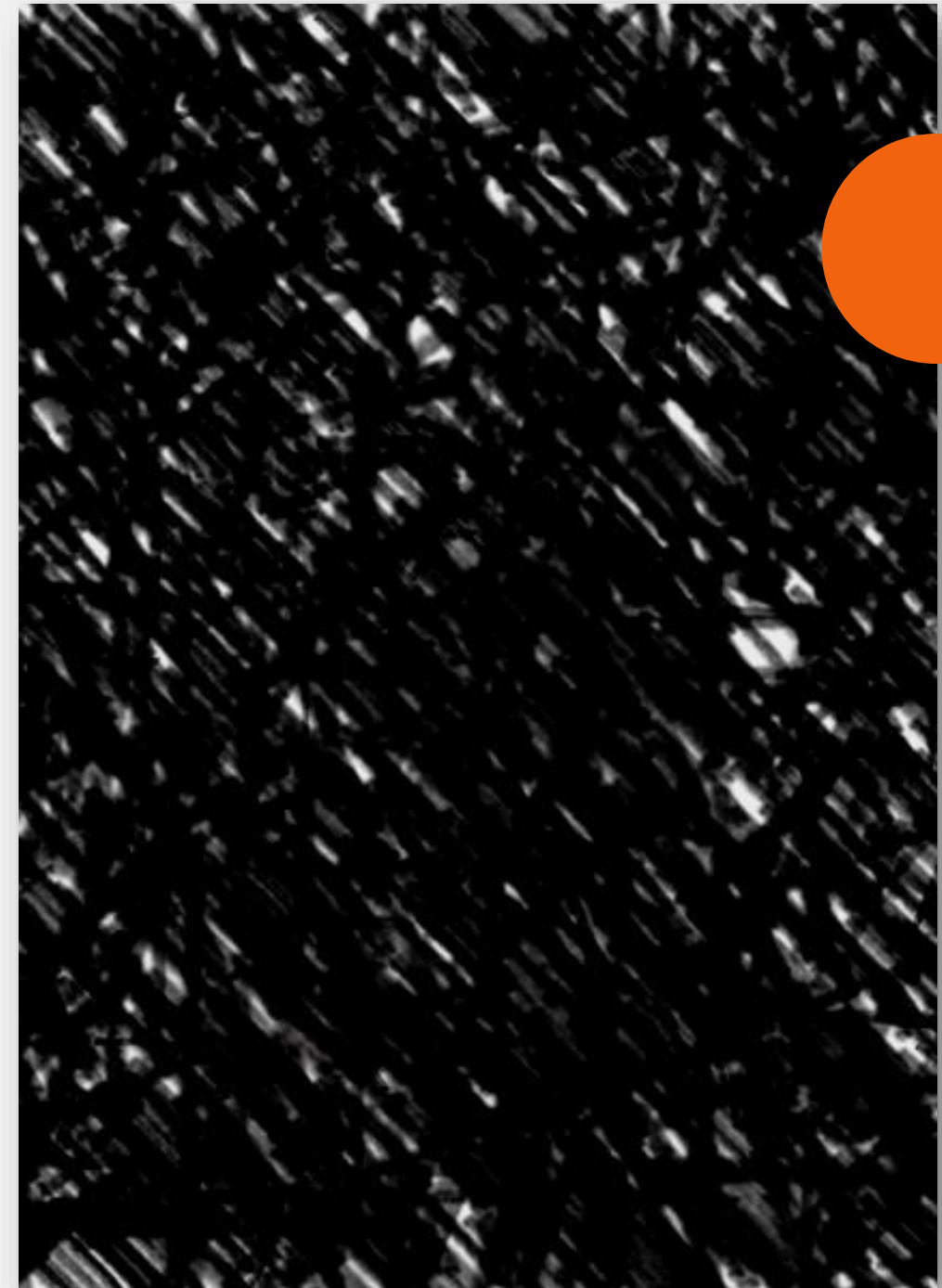
The Key point is *Deliberate Practice*:

- **Focused Work (Deep Work)**
- **Heavy Cognitive Load**
- **No Distractions**

# Fin.

● In the end, in the words of Steve Martin, you'll be:

*So Good They Can't Ignore You...*





# Resources

- Some Useful Resources to Check Out:
  - i. <https://calnewport.com/>
  - ii. <https://www.thedeeplife.com/>
  - iii. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cal\\_Newport](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cal_Newport)
  - iv. <https://medium.com/we-will-think/>
  - v. <https://commoncog.com/so-good-they-cant-ignore-you/>
  - vi. <https://www.youtube.com/@CalNewportMedia>
  - vii. Lex Fridman Podcast
  - viii. Deep Questions Podcast & Talks at Google