

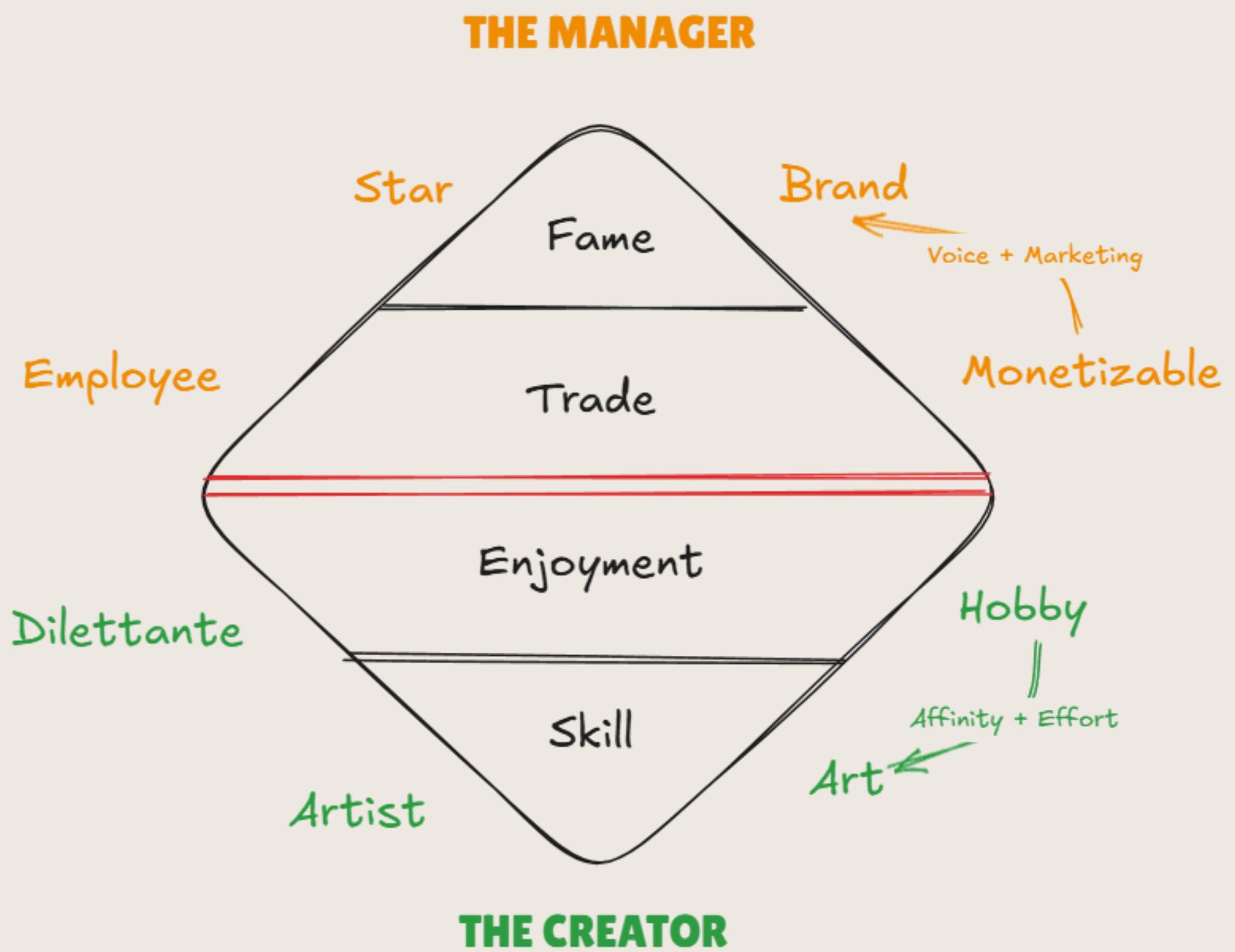


A BETTER MODEL THAN IKIGAI

by Arun Rajappa, 19.05.2025, @appa

Ikigai doesn't work (for me!). A key problem is money, the circle of "what you can be paid for": how does it play with what you love? Also, what does "What the World Needs" even mean, so pompous?! Also, the word "Passion" troubles me – the intersection of what you love and what you are good at is much more of a "Calling" than a passion.

So, I created my own (better) model. It's called "Silly Guy". Here it is:



This model starts by recognizing a fundamental truth that is known to children: you can't monetize your enjoyment, it reduces the joy. As the Beatles song goes, "Money Can't Buy Me Love". Mixing the two is difficult, if not dangerous.

So, here's what this model says:

1. Start with your enjoyment. See what you are drawn to naturally, where you have an affinity and you put in effortless effort. Skill will develop, and this will become your art. This is the Creator archetype that some of us will follow, some of the time.
2. Then, there is your trade. This is separate from what you enjoy – it is what you do for a living. It is monetizable. Congrats, you are an employee. Now, if you take "share of voice" and market yourself... you will have built a brand. This is the source of fame and stardom. The archetype for this is the Manager, someone who manages their career trajectory.

All of us are born creators, and then get sucked into the fame game, that requires you to manage your personal brand and ply your trade. It is best to not mix the two, and to keep them separate.

The reason I've called this model the "Silly Guy" is simple: it recognizes that in our world today, to not think about money and fame, and to follow a Creator's path is seen as silly. (BTW, you can call it Silly Gal if you want – it isn't meant to be gendered, and is really a bad pun on Ikigai!)

Then what about The Beatles who had so much money and fame and clearly who loved what they did? Or what about stars like Messi or Tendulkar?

The beauty of this model is that it shows a way out. If you are a Creator, an Artist – find yourself a Manager who can monetize your skill and brand you to create fame. The truth is that most people who are rich and famous, and who are happy pursuing their art have a great manager: Jobs + Woz, Gates + Paul Allen, The Beatles + Brian Epstein.

These two archetypes are Yin and Yang: a manager plying their trade to generate money and fame working with a creator following their calling through enjoyment and skill. This is where greatness is born...