

Zone of Genius

[Video of Naval Ravikant, co-founder of AngelList, explaining why you don't need to be CEO \(22 min\)](#)

What is the Zone of Genius? Well, there are four zones.

1. Zone of Incompetence.
2. Zone of Competence.
3. Zone of Excellence.
4. Zone of Genius.

Zone of Incompetence are the things that other people probably do better than you (ie- fix your car), and therefore you should outsource if they don't give you joy.

Zone of Competence are the things that you do just fine, but others are as good as you (ie- clean your bathroom) and therefore you should outsource if they don't give you joy.

Zone of Excellence are the things that you are excellent at (ie- better than others), but don't love doing. This is the danger zone. Many people will want you to keep doing these things (as they gain significant value from you doing them, ie- key functions in your job), but this is the area that you should also look to move away from. This is the hard one!

Zone of Genius are the things that you are uniquely good at in the world, and that you love to do (so much so that time and space likely disappear when you do them). This is where you can add most value to the world and yourself. This is where you should be driving toward spending most, if not all, of your time.

Some people worry that if each of us operates solely in our Zone of Genius that no one will be available to do the un-fun stuff. This is a false fear. There are many personality types. For every activity that feels un-fun to you, there is someone out there who not only excels at it, but loves it. (Yes, even the "horrible" tasks, like firing people.) The key in any organization is for people to be transparent about what their Zone of Genius is, and then map all activities to the right people (through an AORs list).

Now that you know what a Zone of Genius is, how do you identify yours? Oddly, because time and space likely disappear when you are in your ZoG, you are probably not even aware of what you do that is uniquely amazing. To discover it, you likely have to crowdsource other people's experience of you. Because others who interact with you can usually see it quite clearly.

To do this, identify a group of people who interact with you regularly. Send them each a message:

"I am trying to understand the things that I am uniquely good at in the world. It is difficult for me to see them myself. But I am hoping that you can help me identify them. Would you be willing to take 10 minutes to answer the following questions? If yes, thank you. If not, no problem at all. I understand that this is an imposition on my part.

In your interactions with me:

- What do I do that you experience as "world-class"?
- What do I do where I appear to be experiencing fun, peace or joy (if different from above)?
- What do I do that I am good at but that I don't appear to enjoy?
- What do I do that I am not better than others?
- What do I do that I am actually worse than others?"