

# HOW PET PROJECTS CAN ENHANCE YOUR CAREER AND MAKE YOU HAPPIER

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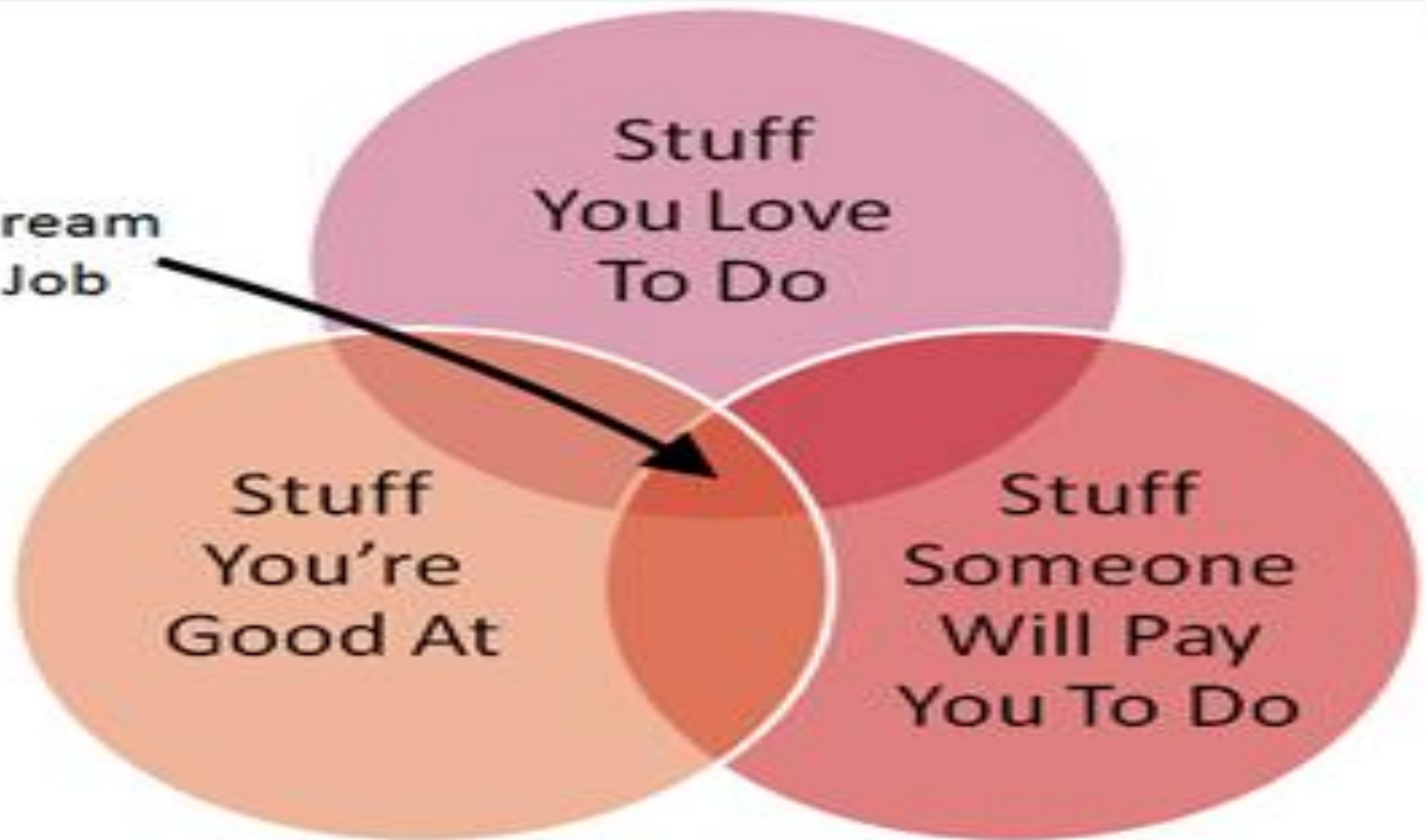
# Definition



*pet project:*

A **small project you** do because you **want to**

Dream  
Job





# The problem

- Random bits:
  - ▣ Knowledge  $\leq 1$  ORM
  - ▣ JavaScript is “good for validation and that’s about all”
  - ▣ Don’t read tech books
  - ▣ Never attended a user group/Code Retreat
  - ▣ Single language/vendor skill set
  - ▣ Company-time learning or ... nothing
- Skills, Motivation, desire
- No ***practicing of creativity***
- Option Blinkers on
- The Google Gartner Problem
- Your job isn’t safe







# MOTIVATION

It's not that I'm lazy, it's that I just don't care.



# Other reasons I hear

- “I’m not allowed to”
- “I learn enough 8-5”
- “would I get paid to learn?”
- “I heard it's pretty cool, but we don't use it at work so I haven't really looked at it”
- “I already have a fulltime job”
- “...wife ... kids ... no time ...”
- “but ... I already know everything”
- “...why...?”

# Why do it?

- \*your\* creative outlet
- Can be closely aligned to career goals
- Test run your ability to do everything – without major risks
- Great way to learn something new
- Fluff for the CV
- Gives you something to point at and say:
  - ▣ “I made that”
- Demonstrates ability to:
  - ▣ Get things done
  - ▣ Do things on your own
- Learning

# Which would you prefer?



# Ways to market

- Use GitHub as a marketing tool
- Get a good domain name + Twitter account
  - ▣ use both !
- Demo at user groups
- Demo during other peoples' talks
- “Screen time”-hack at conferences



Hamster  
projects

# Making it work in a corporate





# Time

- 3M popularized it in 1940's, Google 50 years later
  - ▣ 3M – 15% time
  - ▣ Google – 20% time
- 3M
  - ▣ Experimentation begets innovation
  - ▣ It's OK to daydream
- Worst case
- Not about doing private stuff on company time

# Project criteria

- Short duration
- Single developer/creative type
  - ▣ Chance to do end-to-end mini project
  - ▣ Demonstration of passion
  - ▣ Freedom to find new efficiencies
- Applicable to the business/upcoming projects
- Not overly time-sensitive
- Management buy in
  - ▣ Demonstrate need
- Must be fun !

# Sample project : NoSQL

- Brief
  - find out what this “document database” thing is
- Owner
- Date required
- Cap on amount of effort: x hours
- Completion criteria:
  - How does it improve on what we're already using/doing?
  - Cost to change to this from SQL?
  - How widely applicable?
  - Who else is using it?
  - Local skills?
  - Should our company care?
  - 20 minute presentation to all staff
  - Handover document + code
- Reward
  - Bonus points
  - Gadget
  - Boss to make you coffee for the week

# Assignment

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- Company-driven
  - ▣ Pet Project Pile
  - ▣ Rotation policy
- Staff-driven
  - ▣ Complete trust / self-organising
- Vetting is NB
  - ▣ Email group
  - ▣ Manager ...

# Staff rewards

- Keep off payroll / standard project work
- Extrinsic
  - ▣ Free stuff
  - ▣ Budget for hardware
- Intrinsic
  - ▣ Tribes & recognition
    - Mention at company meeting, Twitter account, etc...
  - ▣ Get to play with new stuff
  - ▣ Be seen as an expert
  - ▣ Knowing you have:
    - Helped & shared info
    - Accomplished something (on your own)

# Company rewards

- Technology
  - ▣ R & D, tech reach, knowledge base
- Staff
  - ▣ Keeps them engaged
  - ▣ Reinforcing the creativity / autonomy angle
- Risk
  - ▣ Tech spikes
- Customers
  - ▣ Better
    - solution choices
    - approaches/processes



# Corporate: cautions

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- ❑ Overtime mentality
- ❑ Common sense
- ❑ Busy <sup>vs</sup> productive
- ❑ Don't force it
- ❑ Gamification <sup>vs</sup> competition
- ❑ Death by committee

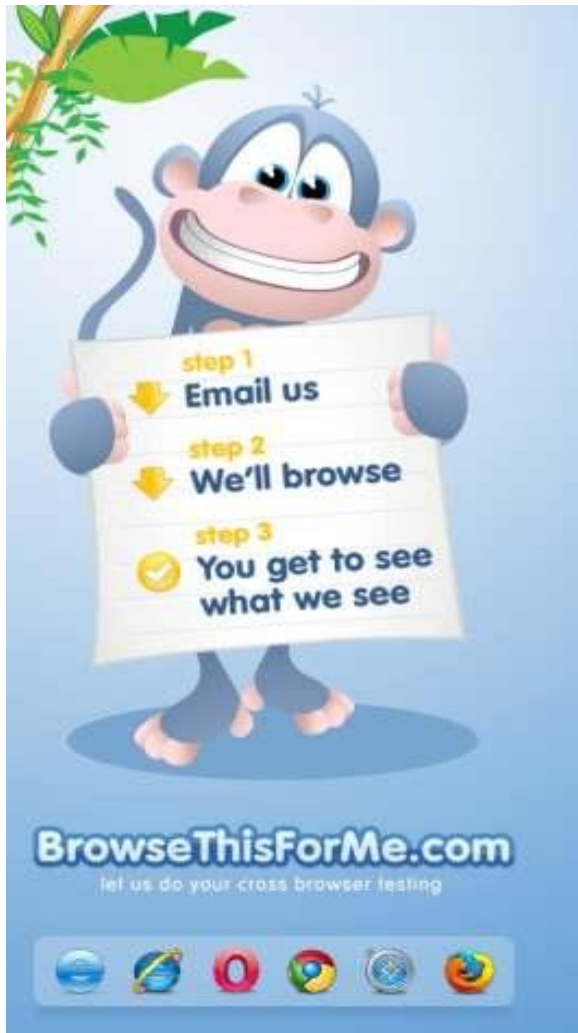
# Lessons I learnt



YMMV

\* I didn't learn enough

# BrowseThisForMe.com



- Don't give up too soon  
(even if \*no one\* is using your product)
- If someone says it's a great idea after you've canned it, then ... you're a doos

# findfreewifi.co.za



- If you don't use it ... no one will
- Keep trying
- Great way to make new contacts
- Make it easy for others to contribute  
(because they *\*really\** want to)
  - ▣ Github hosted code
  - ▣ Non-proprietary code
  - ▣ Ready-to-do tasks on Trello
- @FindFreeWiFi



- The 1<sup>st</sup> customer
- Pivoting is hard
- Iterating is even harder
  - ▣ V1 – 2011
  - ▣ V2 – 2012
  - ▣ V3 – 2013
  - ▣ V4 – 2014
- Ask for help before you need it
- DON'T LISTEN TO EVERYONE
  
- @JSinSA

# Call to action



- Go make something
- Demonstrate a passion for your work

\* Both will set you apart from the other 99%



# Links of interest

## Mindset

Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, Shunryu Suzuki

- <http://www.amazon.com/Zen-Mind-Beginners-Shunryu-Suzuki/dp/1590308492>

Daniel Pink: Autonomy, Mastery & Purpose

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdzHgN7\\_Hs8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdzHgN7_Hs8)

## Product development / business

2007 MySQL conference keynote, Guy Kawasaki

- <http://itc.conversationsnetwork.org/shows/detail1867.html>

Robert Kiyosaki books

- <http://www.amazon.com/Robert-T.-Kiyosaki/e/8001H6GV90>

The Beermat Entrepreneur, Mike Southon

- <http://www.amazon.com/The-Beermat-Entrepreneur-Great-Business/dp/0273704540>

## Developer culture

Sharpening the saw, Scott Hanselman

- <http://www.hanselman.com/blog/SharpenTheSawForDevelopers.aspx>

"501" developers, Scott Hanselman

- <http://www.hanselman.com/blog/501DevelopersFamilyAndExcitementAboutTheCraft.aspx>

"If you don't have pet projects, I don't think I want you", Oren Eini

- <http://ayende.com/blog/90113/if-you-donrsquo-t-have-pet-projects-i-donrsquo-t-think-i-want-you>

# Links of interest

## Time management

How to simplify your life, Kustenmacher

- <http://www.amazon.com/How-Simplify-Your-Life-Practical/dp/0071433864/>

4-hour Workweek, Tim Ferriss

- <http://www.amazon.com/4-Hour-Workweek-Anywhere-Expanded-Updated/dp/0307465357/>

Value of time, Jack Groetzinger

- <http://jackg.org/the-value-of-time>

Relationship Hacks, Hanselman

- <https://leanpub.com/RelationshipHacks>

Lifehacker: "How I work" series

- <http://lifehacker.com/how-i-work/>

## General stuff

Coursera - gamification

- <https://www.coursera.org/course/gamification>

General Reading

- [http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023\\_3-57550445-93/jack-dorsey-twitter-was-built-in-two-weeks/](http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-57550445-93/jack-dorsey-twitter-was-built-in-two-weeks/)
- <http://techcrunch.com/2012/01/20/do-great-things/>
- <http://pandodaily.com/2013/04/02/an-acquisition-is-always-a-failure/>
- <http://www.fastcodesign.com/1663137/how-3m-gave-everyone-days-off-and-created-an-innovation-dynamo>
- <http://www.slideshare.net/playfulwingmen/gamification-extrinsic-vs-intrinsic-rewards-17681228>

## Augmented Reality demo

- <http://www.qualcomm.com/solutions/augmented-reality>
- <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/chest-burster/id536120336?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4>

## Productivity

- <http://www.thedailymuse.com/career/a-better-to-do-list-the-1-3-5-rule/>
- <http://www.pomodortechnique.com/>

# Questions

@BadLassie →

