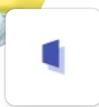


**Aaron Francis**

MARKETING ENGINEER, TUPLE



The ReadME Project amplifies the voices of the open source community: the maintainers, developers, and teams whose contributions move the world forward every day.



No matter how hard you work, it still takes a little bit of luck for something to hit. That can be discouraging, since luck feels like a force outside our control. But the good news is that we can increase our chances of encountering good luck. That may sound like magic, but it's not supernatural. The trick is to increase the number of opportunities we have for good fortune to find us. The simple act of publishing your work is one of the best ways to invite a little more luck into your life.

Before we get into the “how,” it’s important to get on the same page about the “what.” What are we talking about when we say “luck?” There are a lot of definitions that could apply, but let’s stick with a simple one: Luck is when something unexpected and good happens to you. Unexpected and good. Who doesn’t want to increase the odds of something unexpected and good?

In our world, luck can include:

- Having your OSS library take off
- Being invited to speak at a conference
- Landing a new job

- Making new friends in your community

None of these things are totally in your control, which can at times feel frustrating.

How can we increase the odds of finding luck? By being a person who works in public. By doing work and being public about it, you build a reputation for yourself. You build a track record. You build a public body of work that speaks on your behalf better than any resume ever could.

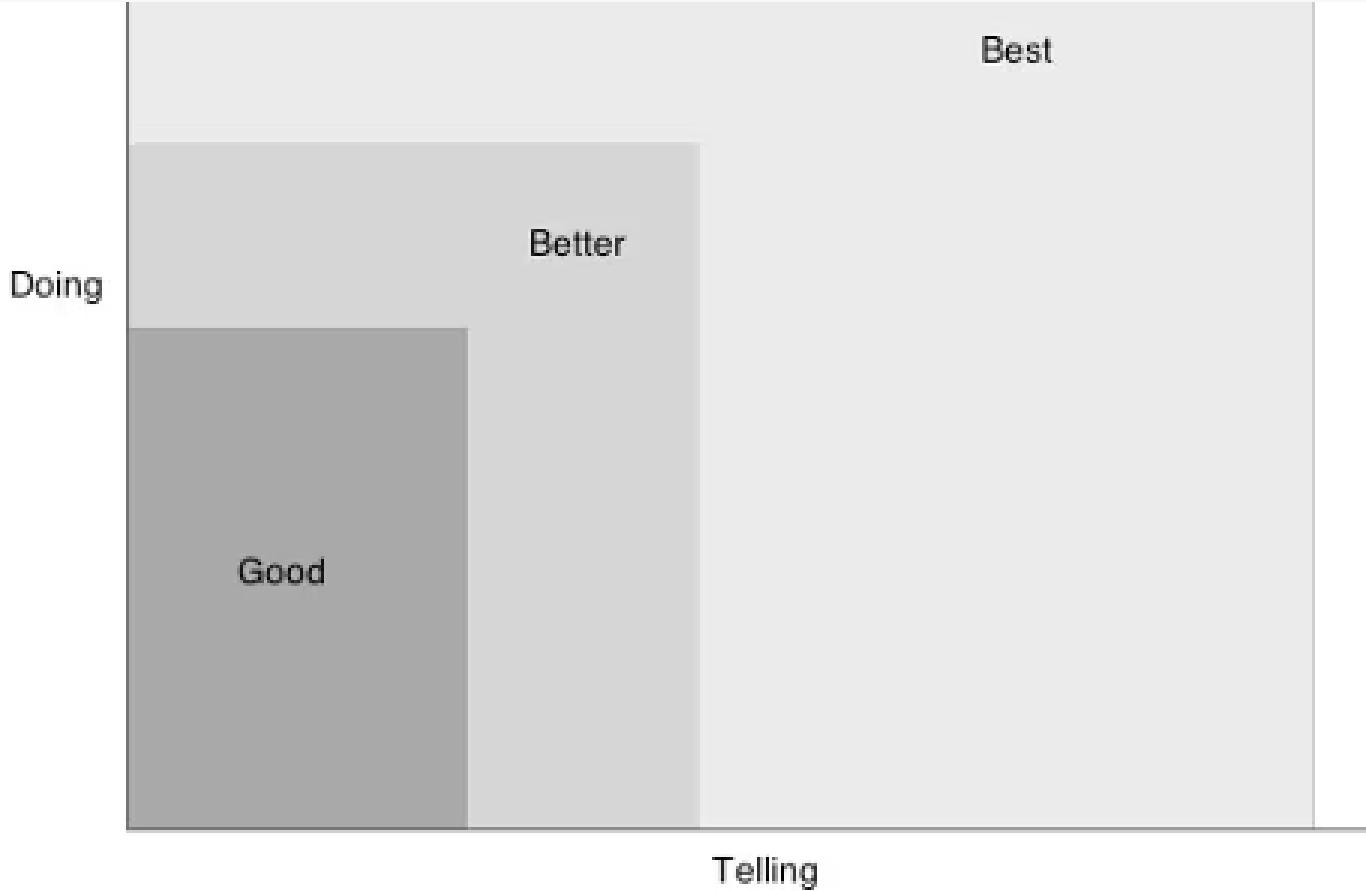
The goal is not to become famous, the goal is to increase the chances of luck finding us. For me, one of the most helpful ways to think about this has always been the concept of the “Luck Surface Area,” described in an [old post by Jason Roberts](#). He wrote (and note, the emphasis is mine):

*“The amount of serendipity that will occur in your life, your Luck Surface Area, is directly proportional to the degree to which you **do something** you’re passionate about combined with the total number of people to whom this is effectively communicated.”*

Going further, he codifies it into a formula where:

$$1 \text{ Luck} = [\text{Doing Things}] * [\text{Telling People}]$$

The more things you do multiplied by the more people you tell, the larger your Luck Surface Area becomes. The larger your Luck Surface Area, the more likely you are to catch luck as it flows by.



Source: [Jason Roberts](#)

Doing the work

Before you can publish your work, you have to actually *do* the work. The good news for you is that by even reading this Guide on The ReadME Project, you've probably already self-selected into a group of people for whom "doing things" comes somewhat naturally. You're a developer, a designer, a creator, an author, or something else entirely. Whatever moniker you want to give yourself, you're built to *do* things, and that's the important part.

If that doesn't ring true for you, you may fall into one of two groups:

1. You actually *are* doing things, you've just trained yourself to think that anything you do isn't worth sharing.
2. You *want* to be doing things, but you can't bring yourself to get started.

If you're in the first group, you may need to step back and reframe the work you're already doing. This is a common blind spot for people who are executing at a high level! They've forgotten just how much they know. They think that they're not doing anything interesting because they assume that everyone knows as much as they do. This effect is only exacerbated when everyone in your immediate vicinity is at a similar—or higher—skill level. As you become more of an expert, your quality bar gets higher and higher and you forget that everything you know is not known by everyone.

than everyone. To that I say “resist!” There is no life there. My encouragement to you is to view that as objective evidence that people want to know all of the things that you already know! There is a huge opportunity for you, should you decide to start sharing your work.

If you’re in the second group, you just need to start. Start anywhere, start on anything, start something. You’ll never come up with the perfect idea for an OSS library, a business, a podcast, or an article by just thinking about it. Start on something, today. It won’t be the perfect version of the thing you have in your head, but you’ll be in motion. Motion begets motion, progress begets progress. Pick the smallest thing you can do and get started.

Doing the work is the most important part. It’s the nucleus around which everything else revolves. What that “work” looks like, though, is entirely up to you! That’s the fun part. It can take any form and be in any domain. Wherever your curiosity or expertise draw you, dive into that.

Projects outside of work are a good place to dive into your curiosity.

- If you want to make [a thermal receipt printer that prints GitHub issues](#), you should.
- If you want to [turn a prefabricated shed into an office](#), go for it.
- If you want to go all in on an [SVG drawing tool](#), do it.
- If you want to write tens of thousands of words about [the infrastructure of modern money](#), that’s a newsletter.

Your curiosity will naturally pull you in certain directions, so don’t be afraid to go super deep into a topic that you’re interested in. When a person is truly interested in the thing they’re writing or talking about, their excitement is contagious. Whatever you’re excited about, be excited about it publicly. Whatever you’re curious about, be curious about it publicly. People will want to follow along and you’ll inspire people along the way.

Projects at work can be a good place to dive into your expertise.

It’s likely you’re constantly solving problems and learning interesting things at your job. This is a great opportunity to take what you’re already doing and repurpose it for the benefit of others. You can turn those learnings into blog posts, conference talks, meetups, podcasts, or open source projects.

Of course not everything you do at work is shareable. If the specifics aren’t shareable, the concepts, lessons, and takeaways likely are. While you’re working, keep a scratch pad open and jot down any problems you come across, interesting patterns you see, or things you found confusing. Do this for a month and you’ll have more things to share than you know what to do with!

You’ve done the work, now it’s time to tell people.



Whatever you’re excited about, be excited about it publicly. 

little shy when it comes to telling people about the stuff we've built. That could be for any number of reasons: fear, embarrassment, self-preservation, or an aversion to being perceived as hawking your wares.

It's a valuable exercise to investigate whether or not you resonate with any of those reasons. Are you afraid people are going to make fun of what you built? Are you embarrassed that it isn't up to your own (admittedly high) standards? Are you waiting for some elusive perfect moment? Do you have an aversion to "marketing" and don't want to become the thing you hate? Whatever it is for you, I encourage you to really dig into it and see if that fear is worth keeping around.

Sharing things you're learning or making is not prideful. People are drawn to other people in motion. People *want* to follow along, people *want* to learn things, people *want* to be a part of your journey. It's not bragging to say, "I've made a thing and I think it's cool!" Bringing people along is a good thing for everyone. By publishing your work you're helping people learn. You're inspiring others to create.

You can "publish" anywhere. For me that's mostly Twitter because that's where most of my peers hang out. It doesn't have to be Twitter for you. It could be GitHub, a newsletter, a podcast, forums, your blog, YouTube, or something completely different that's not even on my radar. Anywhere that's not your hard drive counts!

Publishing is a skill, it's something you can learn. You'll need to build your publishing skill just like you built every other skill you have.

Don't be afraid to publish along the way. You don't have to wait until you're done to drop a perfect, finished artifact from the sky (in fact, you may use that as an excuse to *never* publish). People like stories, so use that to your benefit. Share the wins, the losses, and the thought processes. Bring us along! If you haven't been in the habit of sharing your work, it's going to feel weird when you start. That's normal! Keep going, you get used to it.

You've done the work. You've hit the publish button. You've done your part!

Capturing the luck

You've *increased the odds* that good, unexpected things will come your way. The exact form is hard to predict, but here are a few potential outcomes:

- People start to know you as the person that talks about X, Y, and Z.
- You start to get emails from people saying that they read your stuff and liked it.
- You get a DM about a job you might be interested in.
- People ask you if you're taking on new clients.
- Someone you've never met or interacted with will mention you as being an expert in your area.
- A meetup asks you to come talk about the things you've been sharing.
- You become friends with other people in your industry.
- Your OSS library starts gaining mindshare.

The formula is simple.

Do the work. Don't be afraid to dive deep into your curiosity and your expertise. We need more people that are intensely curious. We need more people with deep expertise.

Tell people. Press publish, bring us along, share the journey. Tell us what you've learned, what you've built, or what you're excited about.

The formula may be simple, but I'll admit it's not always easy. It's scary to put yourself out there. It's hard to open yourself up to criticism. People online can be mean. But for every snarky comment, there are ten times as many people quietly following along and admiring not only your work, but your bravery to put it out publicly. And at some point, one of those people quietly following along will reach out with a life-changing opportunity and you'll think, "Wow, that was lucky."



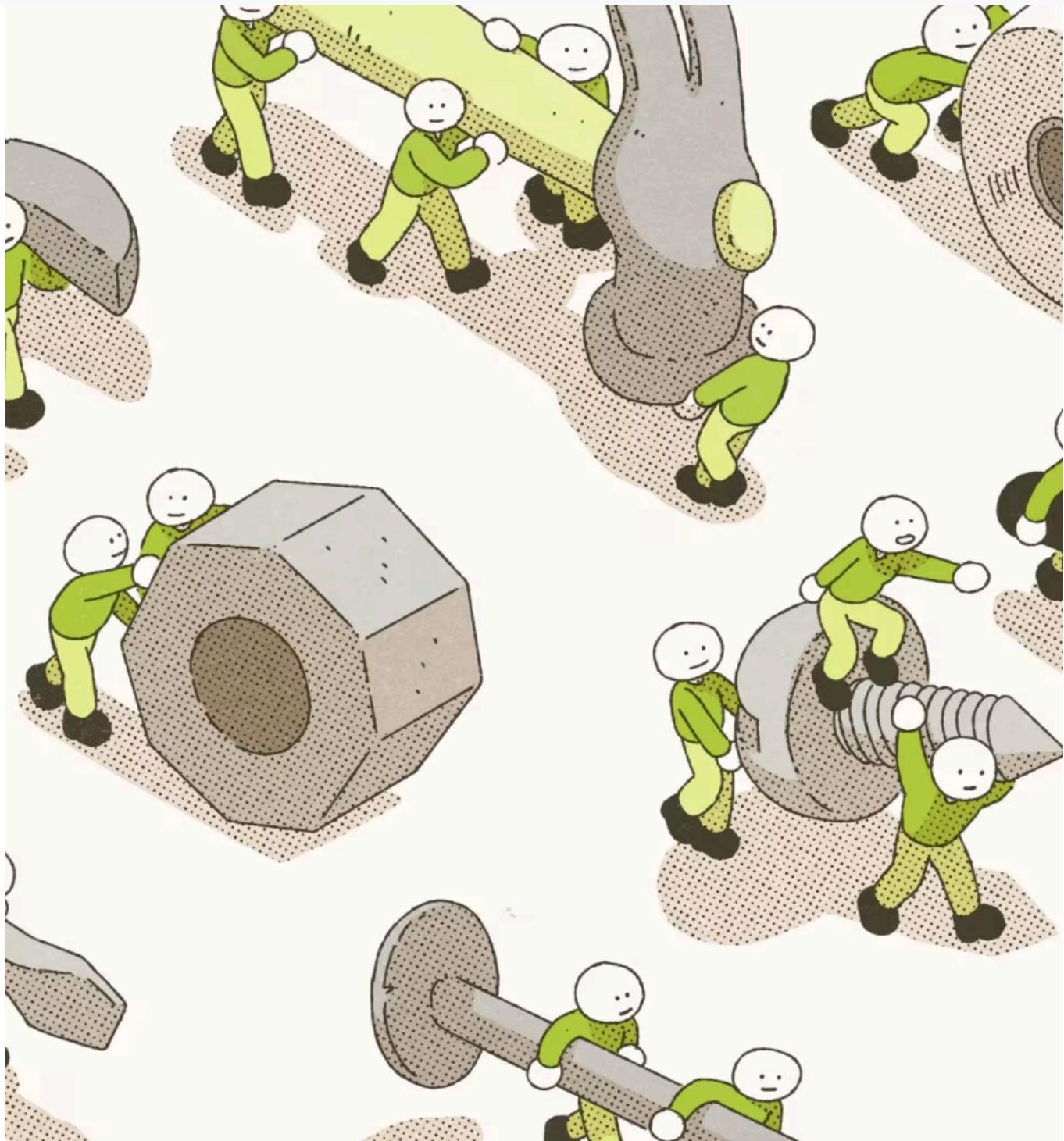
Hello, my name is Aaron. I live in Dallas with my wonderful wife Jennifer and our 🧑‍🤝‍🧑 twins. I recently started my dream job as a marketing engineer at Tuple. I love making things, constantly have a side project going, and am always interested in processes and automation. I'm also a CPA and former Big 4 accountant, and previously managed computers, people, and some robots at a property tax firm.

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About The ReadME Project

Coding is usually seen as a solitary activity, but it's actually the world's largest community effort led by open source maintainers, contributors, and teams. These unsung heroes put in long hours to build software, fix issues, field questions, and manage communities.

The ReadME Project is part of GitHub's ongoing effort to amplify the voices of the developer community. It's an evolving space to engage with the community and explore the stories, challenges, technology, and culture that surround the world of open source.

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