

Elevate YOUr Work SUMMARY

A lot of the work people do is what you might call average, ordinary, or, in some cases, mundane or pedestrian. I like to call it “everyday work.”

Contrary to this “everyday” view, however, this work is actually critical and vital; most businesses would fold if it went undone. The problem is that this work is undervalued, and the people doing it feel they don’t really matter. They see their work as a paycheck. And while it’s true that not everyone has a role that is glamorous, everyone has a role that is necessary, whether it is designing the next great product or sweeping the shop floor.

The truth is, every day, each of us is writing our life story, and we can create one that is exceptionally beautiful, meaningful, and fulfilling, or we can muddle through, feeling undervalued by others and undervaluing ourselves, spending 25% of our life’s quota of waking hours sitting in a cubicle, standing behind a counter, or whatever it is we do being “good enough” just to make it to quitting time. The choice is ours—sleepwalk our life away or get to work on a practice of creating something remarkable.

This book invites readers to begin that practice. It invites people to be the people they want to be and do more than live a life waiting for the weekend and those two weeks of vacation. It’s an invitation to be challenged, lead others, and leave a legacy.

The book is for people who know there are better possibilities and who want to be more than some cog in a machine regardless of the type of work or role. Essentially, it’s for people who want to do their work every day with a sense of purpose and the knowledge that if this day is to be their last, they’ve mattered.

However, two beliefs often stand as obstacles: 1) the notion that it’s someone else’s responsibility to create the right conditions, and 2) the belief that happiness can only come from the pursuit of “doing what you love.”

To address these obstacles the book discusses 1) the fact that ultimately the right conditions rarely exist so creating them and being successful are largely up to each of us, and 2) that being lucky enough to fall into doing work we love is not practical for most people so a better strategy is to pour love into the work we are already doing every day.

And to give people practical ways to overcome these obstacles and create a better working life, the book presents three key toolkits:

1. Make art: take the opportunity to infuse creativity into routine tasks to deliver beauty while also being functional.
2. Make a difference: rather than pursuing self-interested goals, be of service to others and create meaningful change—change that benefits the environment, the community, customers, coworkers, and family or friends.
3. Be professional: deliver technical and human competence and demonstrate reliable, accountable, gracious character consistently.

Through practice and perseverance, each of us, no matter what we do, can elevate our work to a craft, serve it up with a unique flare, and make a positive impact.

Seizing and mastering this opportunity is how to make our jobs more than jobs. Seizing and mastering this opportunity is how to make the job of being the best we can be the best job in the world.

We can all do this if we are bold enough. We can all pledge to do work that makes a difference that positively impacts others. We can all commit to pursuing excellence and developing our competence. We can all endeavor to always demonstrate the highest character standards while using our unique voice to innovate and solve problems that make us stand out as special. Each of us can elevate our work, and in turn, elevate ourselves. This book is here to help.

