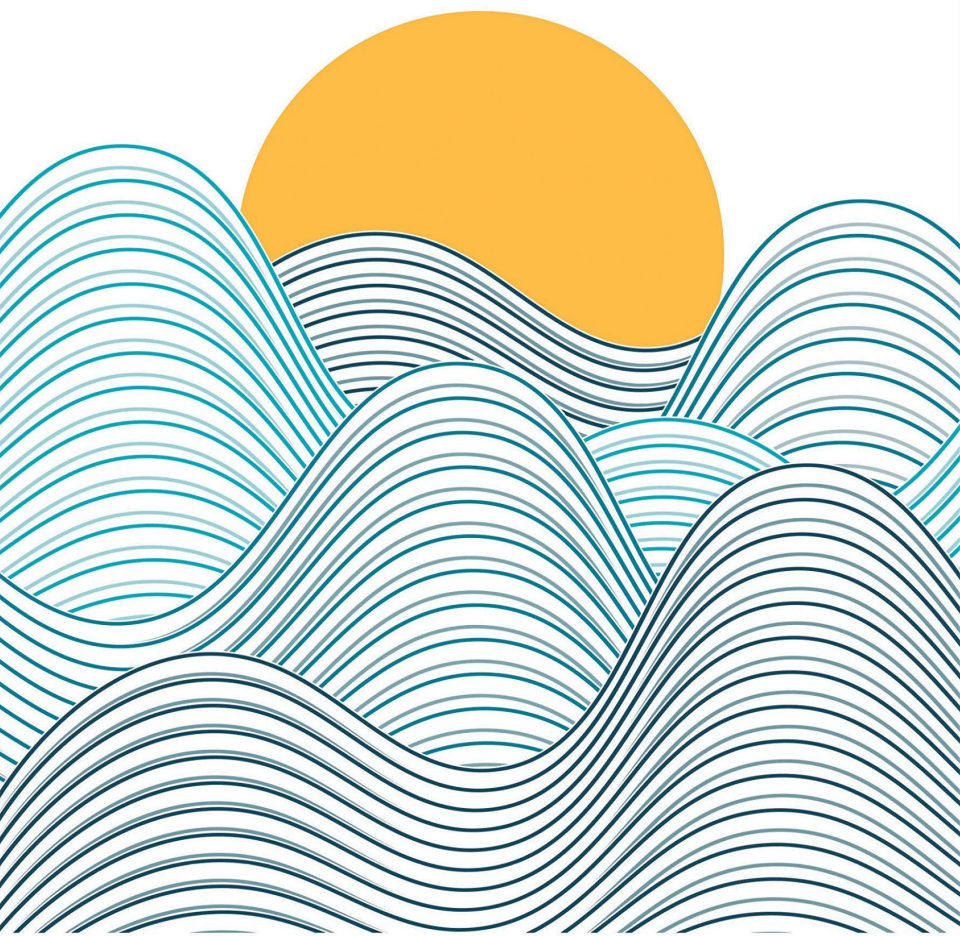


SHAPERS

**REINVENT THE WAY YOU WORK
AND CHANGE THE FUTURE**



J O N A S A L T M A N

CHAPTER 8

THE PURSUIT OF DOPENESS

We can achieve dopeness through small gains and a commitment to continuously learn, practise, and improve. Should you hold a job you don't particularly like, with some ingenuity it may be possible to turn it into one you come to love. As their badass selves, shapers are willing to actively engage with the unknown time and time again.

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He was the mastermind that helped sell 72 000 units of Beyonce's Heat perfume in an hour. This was back in 2010 and the man behind the scenes working his magic was shaper Marcus Collins. Today, he is an executive at a Motor City (Detroit, Michigan) advertising firm and a marketing professor at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business where he teaches a new generation about social engagement.

Collins is a better academic because he's a practitioner and vice versa. The thread that ties his careers together is in an unrelenting curiosity and desire to understand people. 'All I want is dopeness,' is what Collins says when I ask about his unrelenting drive. Whether gracing the stage at conferences, scooping up advertising awards, supporting students, raising his kid, completing his doctorate, or helping out his church, pursuing dopeness is the guiding principle for his life.

Achieving 'dopeness' is really an age-old idea dating back to Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. Loosely translating to human flourishing, *eudaimon* is all about living in good spirits. It can extend to your higher self by achieving your unique potential. And it also entails persevering in the face of adversity. Likewise, dopeness can be realised through small gains and the commitment to continuously learn, practise, and improve. There may be countless posts touting how to hack your way there, but the real question lies in whether you will show up and do the work? For shapers, the answer and key to living well is when it's virtuously earned.

If we're really serious about pursuing excellence, we need to put an end to the god-awful habit of multi-tasking. It's proven to make

us less efficient. We fool ourselves into believing we're doing many things simultaneously when in reality we're just switching between tasks super-fast. We're fracturing our attention because we're still thinking of the previous task when we embark on the new one. 'Studies using fMRI technology to view brain activity have found that it's impossible to do two things at once, even in individuals who claim to be exceptional multitaskers. What's really happening is that your brain is either dividing and conquering, dedicating only half of its available horsepower to each task, or constantly switching between tasks. Either way, your output level suffers, as does the quality of your work,' writes performance expert Brad Stulberg. This is precisely why we do well to work in intervals, just as athletes train.

A QUALITY ONLY YOU CONTROL

OK, so maybe like me, from time to time you wander off day-dreaming of being a food critic or nature photographer. Whatever your fantasy, I'm sure you indulge once in a while. That's OK. The point is this: your view of yourself in work will always be biased. We're all influenced by social cues, professional standards, a tireless media—and perhaps most of all, our inner critics. I might not actually get paid to taste ice cream, but I did take my friends to a Sicilian Gelateria for the finest ice cream of our lives.

The opportunities to indulge our curiosity in work have never been greater. In the end, how we feel about our work is up to us and if we

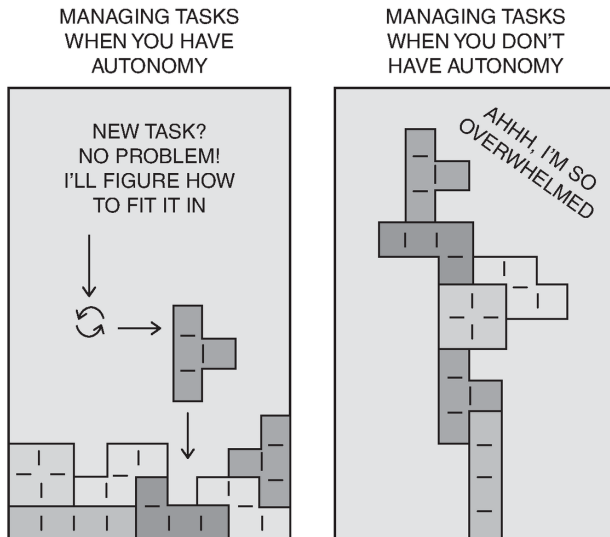
don't like the story we're telling ourselves it's simply time to flip the script. There are so many ways to integrate our hopes and dreams into our working lives. The trick is to rock steady with doing work that matters, stay open to new possibilities, and search for better ways to show up in the world. The dopeness will emerge. Pressing Collins on his vision for the future of work, he replied, 'A classroom where we're always growing to be better.'

Bad managers can be a real drag. So can disenchanting colleagues that relish moaning about work. But if we really want to ease the disengagement crisis, we'll need to start with ourselves. With over 175 cognitive biases at play, your own story of your place in the world is inherently skewed by how you choose to see things. Yet what never waivers is this: when you're cognisant that your work matters and happily engaged in what you do, you perform better. Ultimately, you decide how you feel about your work. The possibilities of work, the sorrows and joys, are psychological.

When you're truly engaged in your work, instead of saying 'I have to go to work,' you say 'I get to go to work.' Your family, friends, and colleagues all take notice. When you are hardwired to operate from this genuine place of purpose, it has a glowing butterfly effect. That inner smirk manifests as an outer beam. Envious onlookers want some of what you're having.

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When it comes down to motivation the trick is to find ways to continually inspire yourself. Muses can help. Whichever way you renew yourself, it's about taking a step back to reveal whether you truly have autonomy in your work, find it meaningful, continue to learn, and dig who you work with. All of these play integral roles in propelling you to be your best.



Fosslien, L. and West Duffy, M. (2019) *No Hard Feelings*. New York: Portfolio/Penguin. Also see <https://www.instagram.com/lizandmollie>

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Reinventing work so that disenchanting employees become fully engaged won't happen overnight. It'll likely happen only for some, over time, and probably through small wins. While we've seen that why we work is for both intrinsic and instrumental rewards, it's internal motivations that can have the greatest impact on performance. Without the agency to control our work, the feelings of progress will remain illusory.

For some, disengagement will be best solved by changing jobs. For argument sake, say your highly disturbed boss enjoys baiting you. You might say the hell with it, pick up, and quit. Or you may think that you should be satisfied because society says you have the 'dream job' and beat out hundreds of others for this coveted role. If your job truly sucks, no matter how much lipstick you put on the pig—it still ain't gonna be pretty.

Job crafting, on the other hand, is another route to achieving dope-ness. It involves something much more subtle yet remarkably powerful: turning that god forsaken job you have (nasty boss and all) into one you love. After all, dissatisfaction breeds innovation and job crafting is the perfect hack.

The concept, developed by psychologists Amy Wrzesniewski and Jane E. Dutton, involves taking the components of your job and

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redesigning them to better align with your talent and interests through a three-tiered framework:

1. **Task crafting:** *changing your activities and day-to-day tasks.*
2. **Relational crafting:** *remodelling your relationship with others to change your perspective on why you do a particular job.*
3. **Cognitive crafting:** *reframing how you see work and the interactions you have with others to open up new opportunities.*

Job crafting has led many people to find more meaning in their work. In one extraordinary case, a hospital cleaner took it upon herself to perform many activities in addition to her usual duties. She would regularly dust the ceilings so patients didn't have to stare at the dirt or cobwebs. She would often take water to thirsty patients between nursing shift changes. For comatose patients, she would even change their surroundings in the hopes that it might improve their well-being (or potentially help wake them up). This cleaner saw herself not just as a cleaner but as a caretaker. Expanding her job, within reason, enabled her to derive much more dopeness.

Employees, managers, customers, and the company as a whole can reap the benefits of job crafting. Indeed, it's fast becoming a necessity because:

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- *Being fulfilled at work translates into an engaged workforce, which correlates with productivity.*
- *The quality of jobs over the quantity is what matters in the long haul for companies and the world.*
- *When the values of the individual align with their work, meaning can ensue, providing variety, autonomy, challenge, feedback on performance, and the opportunity to see progress.*

There are plenty of obstacles to becoming a successful job crafter. Business conditions may be just too toxic to permit fruitful job crafting. But for those progressive organisations that continue to hire for *hunger* over *talent* while granting more discretion to employees within their work, job crafting will prove to be invaluable. After all, a business cannot innovate if everyone within it remains static.

GUMBY TIME

In the early 1980s, management oracle Charles Handy predicated that work would become more bitty and fractured. His portfolio worker—a lifestyle choice that is now the norm—has led to an endless array of personalised life paths. While it may be a luxury to make a living as an organic Kombucha brewer serving hot yoga patrons, there is no shame in contemplating meaning in work.

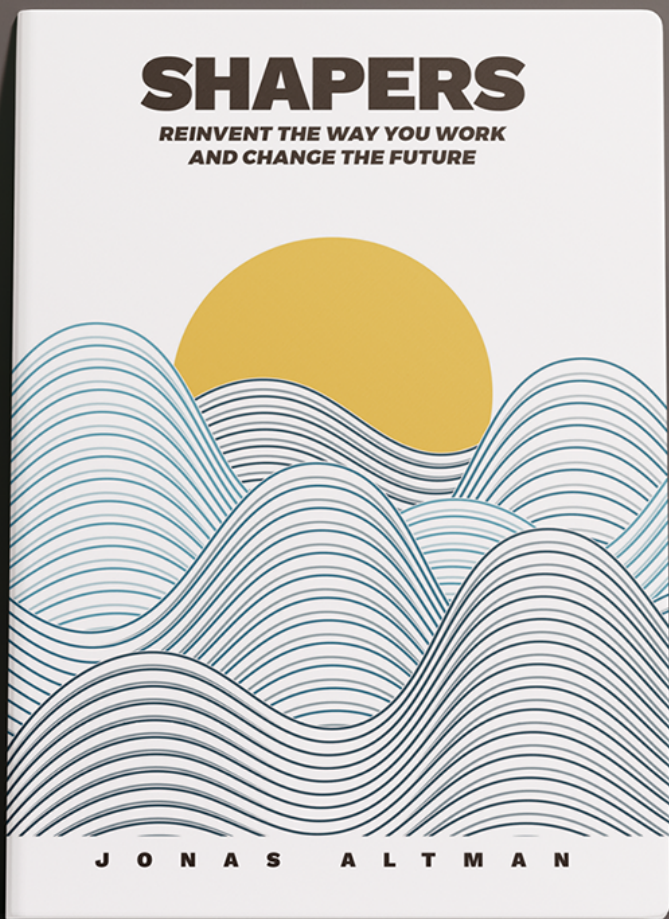
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When having five different careers in a lifetime is now standard, and even advised by the *Financial Times*, the road once less travelled is now bumper to bumper. Persistent job crafters are in effect system designers, seeking to mix and remix the pieces of an endless work puzzle. They retrofit their work so as to make it more compatible with their unique passions, strengths, and values. Indeed, many are fast becoming like Gumby, stretching and re-shaping their careers in real-time.

Sometimes the biggest catalyst for dopeness comes from constraints. Whether it's a hard deadline or family obligations, pressures (either set by yourself or others) help you to be more inventive and, rather ironically, open up new possibilities.

With the continued rise of the global independent workforce, career shaping will be necessary to fuel oneself. The challenge becomes knowing precisely how. Whether inside or outside the company, shaping a meaningful working life is a challenging practice. It's through this struggle that the rewards come. And the degree to which you shape your work and expand yourself is something only you control.

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