

INTRODUCTION

Why This Book, Why Now

We spend too much time working for work not to work.

That's something I've said many times over the years, not because it sounds clever, but because it's true. For many professionals, work feels like a treadmill. We move from job to job, project to project, quarter to quarter, but never stop to ask: *Is this getting me anywhere I want to go?*

Worse, much of the career advice we hear today, especially online, isn't helping. We're bombarded with quick-fix slogans like "*follow your passion*" or "*quiet quit what doesn't serve you*," as if a meme can solve a complex, personal, and evolving journey. These soundbites often feel good in the moment, but they rarely hold up under the pressure of real-life decisions.

What I've learned, after more than two decades in the recruitment industry, is that the difference between an average career and an amazing one is rarely luck, genius, or having the perfect resume. It's something far more accessible, and far more difficult.

It's consistency.

But not consistency in the robotic sense. Not grinding away on the same tasks for decades. I mean **consistency of effort, focus, curiosity**, and the deliberate development of real skills that compound over time. Amazing careers aren't built overnight. They're earned, built, and shaped year after year, decision after decision.

That belief became the foundation for a presentation I've delivered to hundreds of professionals:

Average to Amazing – How leaning in, impacting others, and leaving a footprint creates enduring career success in an era of constant change.

The response was strong. People didn't just want advice. They wanted a framework. They wanted clarity. And maybe most of all, they wanted permission to play the long game in a world obsessed with shortcuts.

So I wrote this book to expand on those ideas. To capture the real drivers

of career success, especially now, in a time when artificial intelligence, job market volatility, and constant reinvention have made the old models obsolete.

Because yes, the world has changed. AI can write code, answer emails, even generate presentations. But it can't build trust. It can't lead teams through uncertainty. And it definitely can't decide what kind of legacy you want to leave behind.

The fundamental skills still matter, but we need to evolve how we think about them.

A New Shape for Career Success

Traditional career paths used to resemble ladders—linear, structured, predictable. But that's not the world we work in anymore.

Careers today look more like **Rubik's Cubes**—modular, layered, and nonlinear. You don't just climb anymore. You rotate, explore, combine, realign. The puzzle is personal—and your job is to figure out the configuration that fits your strengths, values, and goals.

We'll revisit this idea later in the book, but keep it in mind as we explore what it takes to thrive in an era of constant change.

What This Book Will Give You

- A clear, human framework to manage your career on your terms
- A set of four foundational skills—**Capability, Communication, Community, and Consistency**—that compound over time
- A fifth, often overlooked multiplier: **Curiosity**
- A reimagined career model that reflects today's nonlinear, high-speed reality
- Real stories, practical advice, and modern research that bridge the timeless and the new

Whether you're early in your career, in a growth phase, or navigating reinvention, this book is designed to give you the mindset and tools to stop drifting and start designing.

You don't need to be a genius. You don't need a perfect plan. But you do need to get intentional—and stay consistent.

Let's get to it.

A Note on Career Phases: Plant, Root, Grow, Harvest

Before we dive into the core skills, I want to give you a map – a simple way to think about where you are in your career, and where you might be headed next.

Every career moves through different phases. Not always in order. Not always cleanly. But over time, the pattern emerges. I call it the **Career Lifecycle**, and it includes four phases:



Plant – when you're exploring, experimenting, and trying to figure out what fits



Root – when you commit to a direction and build deep expertise



Grow – when you expand your influence, lead others, and accelerate progress



Harvest – when you leverage experience, mentor others, and redefine what success looks like

You've probably experienced all of these in some way, sometimes simultaneously. You might be *planting* a new skill while *harvesting* your reputation in a previous role. You could be *rooting* into a leadership position while *growing* a personal brand on the side.

Careers today aren't ladders. They're ecosystems. And understanding what phase you're in helps you make smarter, more aligned decisions.

We'll explore these phases in depth later in the book - but keep them in the back of your mind as you read. Because knowing where you are changes how you approach what's next.

CHAPTER 1

Average and Amazing

Average and Amazing: What Are They Really?

Let's get one thing out of the way. Average isn't a dirty word.

Somewhere along the line, we decided it was. We started treating "average" like a synonym for failure—like if you're not exceptional, you're wasting your potential. The result? A generation of professionals who feel like they're falling behind even when they're doing just fine.

But here's the truth: average is not failure.

Average is simply a place on a curve. It's a reflection of where you are right now, not a judgment of who you are or what you're capable of. Sometimes, average is even a conscious choice—especially when other areas of your life are taking priority.

The real question isn't whether you're average. The real question is: What are you solving for in your career?

Because if the answer is stability, balance, or predictability, there's nothing wrong with holding steady. But if the answer is impact, growth, or building a career that truly stands out—you're going to need something more.

You're going to need amazing.

The Bell Curve of Career Performance

I first learned about the bell curve in a statistics class at BCIT.

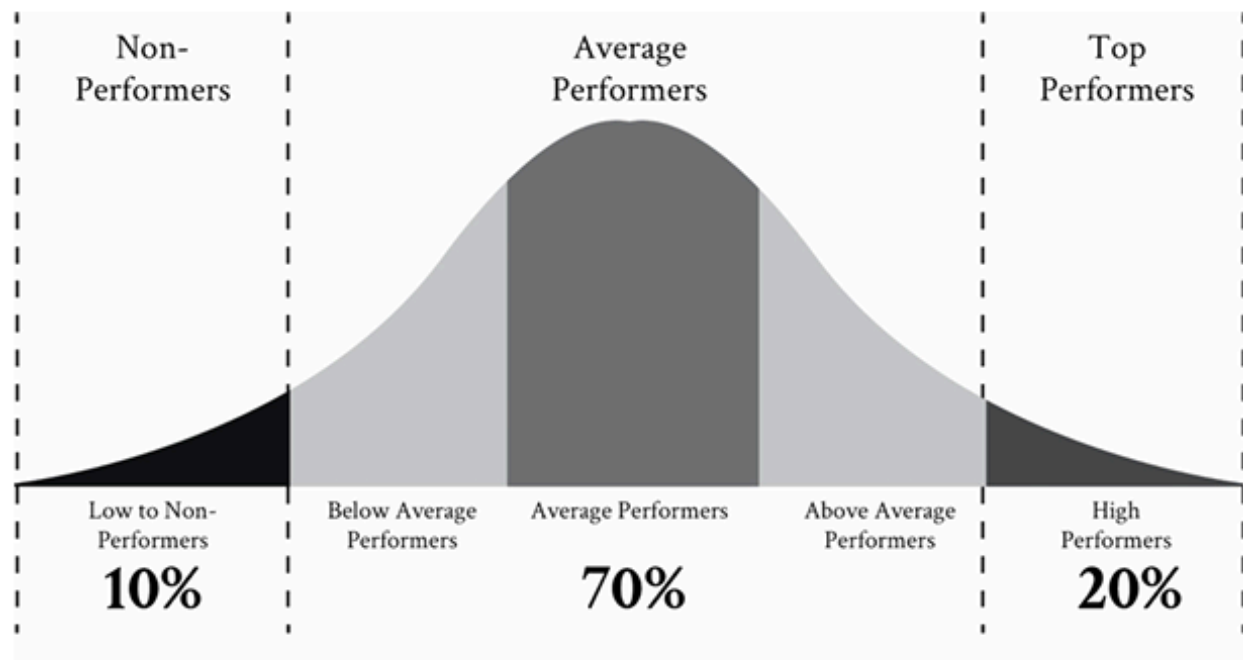
Okay, I know this sounds boring but stick with me.

Charlie Chan was my professor—he was smart, sometimes funny, and brutally blunt about how he saw the world. He explained that in almost any population of people, results about their characteristics distribute along a curve. Most people cluster in the middle of the curve (average). A few lag at the back of the curve (low performers). And a few excel at the right of the curve (top performers).

Grades. Height. Income. Athletic performance. Even driving ability.

What hit me that day wasn't the math. It was the realization that this

same bell curve applies to career performance.



Think about it:

- The left tail represents those disengaged, underperforming, or coasting.
- The middle—the big bulge of the curve—is full of solid, competent professionals. They show up. They get the job done. They're reliable.
- And the right tail? That's the domain of high performers. The 10–20% who consistently deliver more value, drive more results, and build careers that feel alive with momentum.

This isn't about intelligence or talent alone. It's about choices, habits, and focus over time.

The bell curve isn't static. You're not fixed to one spot. You can move—and people do—all the time.

Redefining Average

Here's where we need to reframe "average."

Average isn't laziness. It's not mediocrity.

It's competence. Stability. The ability to hold your own in a world that

demands a lot.

Many people spend most of their careers in this space. And for good reason. They have kids to raise, parents to support, bills to pay, or passions outside of work. They've chosen—consciously or unconsciously—not to let work performance consume a lot of their energy.

That's not wrong. In fact, it can be healthy.

But average becomes **a problem when it's not a choice.**

When it's the result of drifting, not designing.

When you've stopped asking, "What do I actually want from my career?"

If your answer is "more", then it's time to look toward the right tail of the curve.

What Does Amazing Look Like?

So what separates the right tail from the middle?

It's not working longer hours. It's not being the loudest in the room. And it's definitely not some mythical "natural talent" only a few people are born with.

It's a set of traits and behaviors that stack up over time:

- Clarity – They know what they're solving for and align their effort accordingly.
- Deliberate Practice – They don't just show up; they train, reflect, and refine.
- Visibility – They communicate their value so others can see it too.
- Resilience – They stay in the game when others fade, navigating setbacks without losing momentum.
- Curiosity – They keep learning, exploring, and adapting long after others plateau.

These aren't one-off actions. They're patterns. And like compound interest, they reward consistency.

That's what creates an amazing career: small, intentional actions repeated over years.

Choosing Your Place on the Curve.

Here's the part most people miss: neither average nor amazing is inherently "better."

They're just different.

Average gives you one thing. Amazing gives you something else. Both have trade-offs. One isn't worth pursuing unless it aligns with what you actually want from your life and work.

The key is choosing your place on the curve—not sliding into it by default.

So pause and ask yourself:

- Am I okay being “good enough” right now because my focus is elsewhere?
- Or is this the season where I want to stretch toward amazing?

Neither answer is wrong. But one leads to a very different trajectory than the other.

Final Thought

You don't have to live your entire career in the right tail of the bell curve.

But if you're reading this book, chances are you're at least curious about what it would take to get there.

The middle isn't a failure. It's a starting point.

And the right side of the curve? That's not reserved for a chosen few.

It's simply the result of leaning in, staying curious, and designing your career with intention.

The bell curve isn't about where you are.

It's about where you decide to go next.

So... where are you heading?

In the next chapter, we'll unpack why so much of the career advice you've heard is broken—and what to do instead.