

The zone of genius could be your ticket to better work fulfilment, but what is it?

Sometimes in work, things just click. You get absorbed in a task, time seems to fly by, outputs are strong, and achieved with minimal pain. Professional athletes call it 'being in the zone', and this phraseology works well when you have one core objective. However, most workers have multiple projects, tasks and deadlines to manage, and you can't 'be in the zone' all the time, can you?

Temps de lecture : minute

24 September 2024

Well you can, but only if you open your mind to multiple zones, and thankfully, not all of them mean optimal performance.

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Four zones

The four zones methodology stems from Dr Gay Hendricks book '*The Big Leap: Conquer Your Hidden Fear and Take Life to the Next Level*', which was originally published in 2009, but has since trickled down to general business lore.

In it, Hendricks identifies the following zones: zone of incompetence, zone of competence, zone of excellence, and zone of genius.

The activities that fall under your zone of incompetence are those that you perform but aren't very good at – most likely because you're not into them, you don't give them much attention, or you're just bored of them.

You'll likely already know these from your performance reviews, and your lack of motivation or ability to focus on these particular tasks.

Secondly, the tasks you're mediocre or even proficient at performing belong in the zone of competence. Although you are capable of doing these activities, you are not very interested in doing them, and you're not keen to make efforts to improve.

Everything you do well, enjoy doing, and are accustomed to doing falls under your zone of excellence. Although you've enjoyed improving your skills in these areas, it's unlikely that you're motivated to reach a truly exceptional level.

It's fine for now, but these tasks may slide into the zone of competence in future, if you don't develop your skills further or adapt to new technologies.

Zone of genius

Finally, discover your zone of genius. Many workers sit comfortably and are well-compensated in the zone of excellence, but the zone of genius is where your interest and passion in your working life can really take off.

Hendricks recommends thinking about your zone of genius as a way to prioritise what to do in your work (and life) for maximum financial gain and enjoyment.

To determine your zone of genius, think of the activities where you feel highly effective, fulfilled, and where you often achieve flow state.

These are the tasks that you likely perform better than most, and are the happy intersection of your talents, passion and the value you bring to a company or industry.

Perhaps designing intuitive user journeys is your zone of genius? Or is it developing fraud prevention systems? Or maybe it's simplifying complex financial concepts for broader audiences?

Ideally, your zone of genius will be connected to generating revenue, but it's important not to be too literal, otherwise only sales professionals would get into this particular zone. Look at the bigger picture.

For example, writing about financial trends for your company blog may energise you and feel effortless, but what if it doesn't directly generate tons of leads? That's okay. Your content creation generates trust, builds domain authority and broadens the company's visibility, which in turn, attracts new clients over time.

Crossed wires

It's easy to confuse your zone of genius with your zone of excellence. If you're not sure, take a sheet of paper, and draw a line horizontally and vertically across the centre, meaning you've a cross shape on the page.

These are the four zones. In the top left, write 'zone of excellence', and in the top right, write 'zone of genius'. In the bottom left, write 'zone of incompetence', while in the bottom right, 'zone of competence'.

Now, think about the tasks you've worked on and completed in the last week or month. Add each to one of the four zones on the page.

As you work these out, Hendricks suggests asking yourself the following questions to determine your zone of genius:

- "What do I most love to do? (I love it so much I can do it for long periods without getting tired or bored)."
- "What work do I do that doesn't seem like work?"
- "In my work, what produces the highest ratio of abundance and satisfaction to the amount of time spent?"
- "What is my unique ability?" (What can I do that others are unlikely to be able to do at this level?)

Now what?

Once you've identified your zone of genius, it's time to intentionally structure your working life around it.

Look at your zones of incompetence and competence, is there a way to delegate or automate some or all of these tasks?

Next, research continuous learning opportunities for your zone of

excellence and your zone of genius.

Then at your next one-to-one, speak to your manager about aligning your responsibilities closer to your zone of genius. You don't have to use that terminology if it isn't common parlance in your workplace, but do know the business benefits of any pivots you're suggesting you make.

Ask if there's a company budget or time that can be allocated to your upskilling plans, discuss delegation of incompetent and competent tasks, and see if there's a budget to trial particular AI tools that may lighten the load of your more repetitive tasks.

Operating in your zone of genius is a way to unlock professional fulfilment and set yourself up to make more impactful contributions in your company and field. But if your current employer isn't keen to help you reach new professional heights, it could be time to find somewhere new.

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