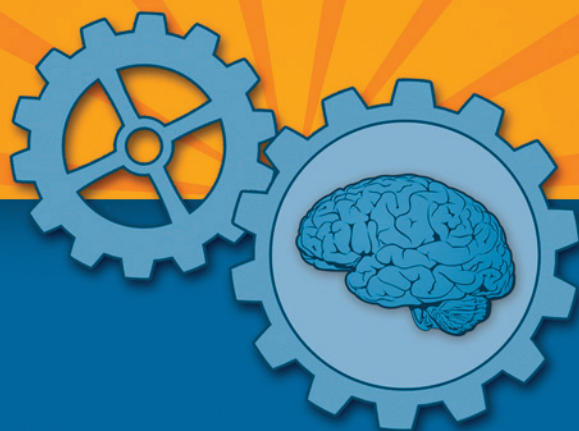


# What's Your Genius?




*HOW THE BEST THINK FOR SUCCESS IN THE NEW ECONOMY*

*"What's Your Genius will help you discover your natural talents and reach your peak level of performance—effortlessly! Jay does a great job of helping you learn the secrets of who you are and how you think, so you can unleash your greatest potential today."*

*~ Marshall Goldsmith,  
New York Times Best Selling author of, What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

**JAY NIBLICK**

**FOREWORD BY ANTHONY ROBBINS**



**THE  
KNOWLEDGE-WORKER'S  
REVOLUTION**

**#1** **GET THE REVOLUTION!**  
Learn how your world has changed and the impact it has on you.

**#2** **JOIN THE REVOLUTION!**  
Learn how to create your own private revolution to respond to an ever changing world.

**#3** **SUPPORT THE REVOLUTION!**  
Recruit others. Tell them about The Revolution.

Welcome to Step #2 in the Knowledge Worker's Revolution. If you haven't gotten the revolution yet (Step #1), go to [www.whatsyourgenius.com](http://www.whatsyourgenius.com) to get your free copy of the *Knowledge Worker's Manifesto*.

**What's Your  
Genius?**

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*HOW THE BEST THINK FOR SUCCESS IN THE NEW ECONOMY*

**JAY NIBLICK**



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“Stop trying to put in what God left out and  
instead, work with what He put in.”

— *Dr. Robert S. Hartman*

## ENDORSEMENTS

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“*What’s Your Genius* will help you discover your natural talents and reach your peak level of performance—effortlessly! Jay does a great job of helping you learn the secrets of who you are and how you think, so you can create your own private revolution and unleash your greatest potential today. Get ready to evolve.”

~ DR. MARSHALL GOLDSMITH, AUTHOR OF *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING, *WHAT GOT YOU HERE WON’T GET YOU THERE*.

“Jay Niblick’s *What’s Your Genius* is an absolute must read. This book is more than an inspirational guide; it will transform the way you perceive abilities and limitations, revealing an entirely new scope of life options which are in complete alignment with your core motivations. Simply put, if you read one personal development book this year this should be it.”

~ DR. IVAN MISNER, *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR AND FOUNDER OF BNI

“I figured that if Jay was good enough to advise Tony Robbins, he was good enough for me, so I immediately dove in and began discovering the secrets to achieving my own private revolution. I found Jay’s work extremely revealing, insightful and most importantly effective. The lessons in *What’s Your Genius* have changed my life forever. Thanks Jay!”

~ TIMOTHY A. MCGINTY, CO-AUTHOR OF *WAKE UP...LIVE THE LIFE YOU LOVE*

“This book is awesome—really awesome. Easily in the same league as *The Five Patterns of Extraordinary Careers*, and Covey’s *7 Habits*. When it comes to your journey toward greater success and happiness, *What’s Your Genius* is a serious tailwind.”

~ MICHAEL LORELLI, FORMER PRESIDENT PEPSICO & PIZZA HUT

“*What's Your Genius* gives you permission to be confident in your God-given talents. Based on years of insightful research, there is wisdom in this book that will help you to recognize the value of your talents and give you confidence to employ them fully. Positive thinking and purposeful action are at the core of its universal message, and it is a book that will open your mind and enlarge your spirit.”

~ GARRY TITTERTON, AUTHOR OF *BRAND STORMING*

“As a coach and a person that is passionate about assisting people to reach their highest potential and play their biggest game in life, I found *What's Your Genius* to provide a brilliant and insightful view on determining what drives us. With some great practical tools based firmly in science this book provides a solid method on how to identify where our Genius resides and unleash it.”

~ GAVIN FRIEDMAN, CORPORATE & EXECUTIVE COACH

“*What's Your Genius* is the logical and practical application in determining your natural talents. The first step is understanding what your strengths are and then focusing on those strengths in what you do in your life. Jay definitely helps you learn to stop following the crowd and become authentic!”

~ HEATHER WILLIAMSON PH.D., PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

“*What's Your Genius* is a fascinating journey into the real reasons behind individual peak performance. Jay shares some powerful and non-conventional lessons learned from some of the most successful people in the world. If you aren't sure where to go, how to get there or are feeling blocked in getting to the next level of performance—you need this book.”

~ DR. TONY ALESSANDRA, AUTHOR OF *SECRETS OF TEN GREAT GENIUSES*

“*What's Your Genius* works on a number of levels. Whether it is through Jay's anecdotes, or the comments from other management luminaries or the wealth of research to support Jay's proposition—where the book stands out is in the way that you are taken on the path to enlightenment and self-development. This is not just a book; it is a real process that engages you for the longer term. For the organizations of the world the implications are that they will need to realign their traditional views of people and performance if they are to tap into the genius of their employees.”

~ GRAHAM HACKETT, SENIOR MANAGER, BAE SYSTEMS UK

To Melanie, whose Genius has “moved” so many,  
and to Zach, Baker and Joseph, whose Genius  
remains untapped and infinite.

Just Do You!

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## FOREWORD

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**D**uring these changing and turbulent times, what is the single biggest factor in shaping the quality of our lives? What affects our ability to not only survive, but also thrive? What are the forces that determine whether we face failure or sustain success?

The truth is these are uncertain times—in 2008, according to the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics there were 43% more people laid off than in 2007. This year, major companies such as IBM have fired 1400 people in the month of January alone. The times are uncertain, but while we have minimum control in being able to change the external environment, we do have maximum power in being able to shift our internal environment—being able to control not only what a situation means to us, but also how we show up. To get the best out of the worst times, we need to demand the best from ourselves—we need to perform at our peak level.

After having the privilege of spending thirty years serving over three million people from over 100 different countries, I know that there are certain patterns that create success and other patterns that breed failure. I've had the pleasure of working with elite, peak performers in business, politics, entertainment and sports such as legendary basketball Coach John Wooden, who won a record ten NCAA championships in twelve years. Coach Wooden's philosophy was simple: "Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do." To him, it was not about

winning or losing, it was about getting the best out of his players' ability, allowing them to focus on their strengths and not their weaknesses. If we adopted a similar focus, we would not only set ourselves up to win in these trying times, but we would be fulfilled in the process. I believe that *success without fulfillment is failure*.

In fact, the definition of success is being able to achieve your goals and be fulfilled in the process. The secret to achieving and being fulfilled is having the courage to go beyond the skills you've learned and discover the gifts that you were born to give and to employ them daily. So many people settle and adapt to the work or career they've chosen or fallen into. They might even say, "Well, obviously I've got to enjoy my work. I picked it, didn't I?" While that may be true, the question is: Did you pick it consciously, knowing what your gifts are, knowing what's inside of you that is most powerful? Again, I'm not referring to the part of you that's been educated and trained. We can all train ourselves to do just about anything. This is about the part of you that you were born to use, to contribute, and to serve at a higher level.

Most people pick their work or career unconsciously, based upon conditioning, proximity or expectation—based on reasons that were not completely their own. When that happens, it increases the gap between achieving a depth of success and living a life of meaning and "just getting by." As long as that gap remains—as long as they're trying to do something they're not thrilled about or something that isn't part of their nature—they might achieve in the short-term, but they will never succeed in the long-term.

It's essential for today's employers to recognize and cultivate their employees' talents and gifts if they want to retain them and remain viable in the marketplace. And it's critical for employees to understand what really motivates them in order to be able to communicate these needs to their employers and generate opportunities for win-win situations—where they are committed to peak performance and feel like there's principle and enjoyment in what they do; where business owners and managers are nurturing and efficiently supporting their staff; and companies are reaping the benefits of cooperation and optimal productivity.

Jay Niblick's in-depth, comprehensive study *What's Your Genius* represents a truly ground-breaking approach toward innovating how we think of our careers, our life's purpose, and ourselves. Niblick has taken on the tremendous responsibility of transforming cultural attitudes about work and achievement that have been in place for more than a century, while simplifying the exhaustive academic legwork that legitimizes the importance of individual authenticity.

He introduces easily-implementable strategies for not only attaining that sense of real accomplishment we all long for in life, but also a truly profound understanding of who we really are at our core. With these imperative components in place, finding fulfillment in what we do does not have to be reserved for the lucky few. With a few minor (and in some cases, major) adjustments to our perceptions, what people want most out of themselves and this key aspect of life is readily available.

Whether you're pursuing your dreams as an entrepreneur or exploring other career options, being authentic and actively appreciating what you're really capable of is going to be one of the most important forms of social and economic capital in the coming years.

It will make the difference between mediocrity and excellence; the difference between "just getting by" and really thriving instead. It's the psychological and emotional edge that will help us create better lives not only for ourselves, but also for everyone that we influence in our global community. With increasing economic pressure, now more than ever, is the time to extract the best out of yourself and to use that gift to touch the lives of others.

Jay Niblick's *What's Your Genius?* will give you the tools to utilize your strengths to reap higher returns and the success that, as Coach Wooden puts it, "comes from knowing that you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming."

— Anthony Robbins  
May 2009

## INTRODUCTION

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Did you ever have that one class in school where no matter how hard you tried you just never seemed to get it? No matter how hard you studied, no matter how hard you worked, results just never seemed to come easily, if at all. Even if you did do well, was it always a struggle? If you're like most people, there was also another class where the exact opposite was true and things just came to you almost effortlessly. The whole concept just made sense, and you achieved greater success more naturally with less effort.

One reason for this is that each of us has certain innate talents for thinking and making decisions. These natural thinking talents allow us to see some things very clearly while filtering out others almost completely. For example, some people naturally see the big picture very easily (the talent for strategic thinking) or intuitively understand how various parts work together (the talent for integrative ability), while for others understanding complex problems is like second nature (the problem-solving talent).

Our thinking talents and decision-making styles comprise the very core of who we are. They make us the unique individuals that we see in the mirror each morning, and they hold the greatest potential for delivering our greatest levels of performance and success.

The most recent scientific evidence would argue that these decision-making styles are engrained in who we are by both our genetics and

early life experiences. As a result, while these thinking talents may change and develop slightly over the course of our lives, these are not things that you can develop through training exercises or sheer effort in adulthood. If your job (or class) depends heavily on a thinking talent that you don't possess, or if it doesn't align well with what thinking talents you do possess, you are in trouble. You will always be that student sitting in the difficult class, working harder than anyone else yet still achieving less success.

Conventional wisdom, however, would argue that you should do just that. The traditional view of self-improvement says that it is good to place yourself in that difficult class, to become well rounded in a wide variety of areas and to identify your weaknesses so you can *fix* them and turn them into strengths. Unfortunately, conventional wisdom, which this book will challenge, is based on time-honored principles, and the problem with such principles is that they can become subject to less and less consideration over time. Eventually, such "wisdom" becomes such a part of the norm that it fails to be questioned at all, becoming accepted without question—even when it is wrong.

*What's Your Genius* is the result of seven years of research into what drives individual performance and excellence. As part of this research, we looked at over 197,000 people—including some of the most successful people in a wide variety of fields—to see if we could identify common factors present among the top performers. The study separated performance into five levels with the fifth level being the peak of performance or what we called "Genius." So this isn't a book about how to increase your intelligence; it's a book about how to help anyone reach peak levels of performance by being true to their own natural thinking talents—their own "best way" (i.e. their genius).

What the study revealed is that the most successful people don't follow conventional wisdom. They understand that their natural talents are fixed and therefore they don't spend their lives trying in vain to change their natural thinking talents. They understand that they are who they are, and instead of wasting vast amounts of energy trying

to become something they are not, they invest that energy in trying to better apply the natural talents they already possess. To quote an expert in the field, Dr. Robert Hartman, today's best performers, "stop trying to put in what God left out and instead work with what He put in."

The message isn't that you don't have to work hard to be successful. It isn't that you shouldn't continually attempt to expand and grow either. Learning what your natural thinking talents are, and learning how to utilize them for maximum effect is plenty hard enough. The message of this book is that there is a difference between working hard in the dark and working hard in the light—the full light of awareness for what and who you are and how best to leverage that for optimal success.

Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, one of the Geniuses interviewed in the research, says that when it comes to continuing to develop and refine himself, "I constantly try to refine the strengths I have, but that doesn't mean I try to develop things I don't already have. One danger in the message of only focusing on strengths is that people may perceive this to mean that they don't have to improve at all. Rather, within their natural talents they must always improve. The key is to find a role that depends primarily on what you do well, then continue to get even better at it through practice, awareness, acquired knowledge and experience." Marshall goes on to say, "There are a whole lot of things I stink at. I just make sure I don't have to do them to be successful."

To succeed today you must find your own best way to do things, because when we really know ourselves, when we are completely authentic to our natural thinking talents, when we create goals and objectives that feed off those talents, an almost mystical energy seems to show up in what we are doing. The stars seem to align, and, as Basil King put it, "mighty forces come to our aid."

In the end it's not about fixing who we are, it is about *trusting* who we are and letting our natural talents do their thing. In that moment—where all of our talents are optimally aligned with what we are doing—anyone really can become a genius.

Some of the successful people studied who helped teach us this truth include:

- Anthony Robbins—Personal Life Coach and Peak Performance expert;
- Dan Lyons—CEO of Team Concepts Inc., seven-time National Team member, World Champion and Olympian in rowing;
- Frances Hesselbein—Founding Director of the Peter F. Drucker Foundation and former CEO of Girl Scouts of America;
- Laurence Higgins, M.D.—Chief of Sports Medicine and Shoulder at Harvard;
- Dr. Marshall Goldsmith—*NY Times* best-selling business author & executive coach to Fortune 500 CEOs;
- Michael Lorelli—former Chief Marketing Officer and President of PepsiCo East and Pizza Hut International;
- Mickey Rogers—World Authority Demolitions Expert;
- Randy Haykin—Founding Vice President Sales/Marketing Yahoo Inc.; and
- Rosemary Hygate—Executive Assistant to the stars

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

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Sir Frances Bacon once said, “Knowledge is power.” Unfortunately, he was only half correct, because only *applied* knowledge is power; otherwise it remains only potential power. While this book will indeed give you new knowledge about yourself and your natural thinking talents, the great challenge is not to understand the practice of being successful, it is learning how to practice that understanding.

As Benjamin Franklin once said, “Tell me and I will forget, show me and I might remember, involve me and I will understand.” Throughout this book you will be given a lot of new knowledge, but to help you really understand that knowledge, you will also be asked to complete certain activities. These are called Genius Action Steps, and they reside in an online suite of tools developed specifically for this book. You now have free access to all of these tools.

Go to: [www.whatsyourgenius.com/workbook](http://www.whatsyourgenius.com/workbook) to create your own free account and access your private workbook. It only takes a few seconds, the system is a secure, password-encrypted site, and you will be the only one who has access to it.

Throughout the book whenever you see the symbol below you will know it is time to go to your WYG online workbook to complete a short exercise or activity to help you apply some new bit of knowledge.



# The Problem

I could see the frustration in her face, and I could hear it in her voice. As I sat there listening to Lina describe her current level of satisfaction with her life, her job and her success, it was glaringly apparent that she was tired, frustrated and just plain spent from working harder than she thought she should have to, only to achieve less than she wanted to. She didn't feel her current job was allowing her to reach her full potential.

Lina and I were sitting in a coffee bar in downtown Zurich, Switzerland where earlier that day I had given a lecture to a group of executives and entrepreneurs on the key drivers of individual performance and excellence. At the end of the lecture I asked the simple question, "How many of you feel satisfied with your current level of personal performance and believe that your role allows you to reach your fullest potential?" The show of hands throughout the room might have represented half of the attendees at best—a room containing over 300 individuals. And there I stood, yet again, staring out into a room full of people with both hands on their laps, looking around somewhat sheepishly, not very excited about their inability to raise their hands up high.

I say “yet again” because this wasn’t the first time I had asked this question. I’ve asked it all over the world, and the response is pretty much the same no matter where I go—from Istanbul to Sydney, New York to Hong Kong, Johannesburg to Zurich. And every time I’ve asked that relatively simple question (a question one would hope is not asking too much), at best 50% of the crowd raises their hands while the rest remain timidly still, indicating more to themselves than anyone else that when they really think about it, they do not feel truly fulfilled in their work or fully satisfied with their own performance and success.

In talking more closely with many of these people, I find that they:

- Feel frustrated and unfulfilled;
- Feel that they put in more effort than they get out in results;
- Feel they have lots of unrealized potential;
- Are dissatisfied with their performance and success; and
- Know they can be happier and more passionate.

Simply put, they don’t feel their current roles allow them to maximize their full potential.

Perhaps even scarier than the percentages is the realization of whom I am talking to in these presentations. I typically present only to executives and entrepreneurs, so if the leaders of the world’s organizations aren’t fully satisfied and passionate about what they do, what does that mean for the organizations and people they lead?

*~ I feel like I put in more than I get out. ~*

For Lina, the vice president of Human Resources at a mid-sized retail company, one of the most telling indicators of her lack of fulfillment and satisfaction came in her acknowledgment that more weeks than not, she looked forward to the weekends but dreaded Mondays. Lina had a first-class case of the “golden handcuffs.” As the primary breadwinner for her family, and with three young children at home and a husband out of work, she needed the financial rewards her

job provided. Unfortunately those were some of the only rewards it provided. Outside of providing her with the money she needed and some dear friends, Lina's job left her constantly battling to achieve the results and success she wanted. In her own words, she didn't feel that her job allowed her to be "true" to herself. This feeling of being "untrue," it turns out, is a constant theme among far too many unhappy people around the world.

Lina was cuffed to a job that she couldn't afford to leave, financially, but couldn't afford to stay in emotionally either. As a result, her dissatisfaction was up and her passion and results were down—way down.

Lina isn't alone. In my work as a business consultant and coach, I have met too many people who feel unfulfilled in their roles and are frustrated with the lack of performance and success they achieve. All too often I meet people who work to live instead of the other way around. I'm not alone in these observations.

A recent Harris poll<sup>1</sup> of 23,000 individuals revealed that only half were satisfied with the work they had accomplished by the end of the week. It's so common for people not to be fully in love with what they do that we've even developed cliché's like: Mental Health Days, the Monday morning blues, Hump day and TGIF.

How many times have you heard someone make the following kind of statement:

- "I can't wait for retirement";
- "Tell me again why I'm here";
- "I never seem to get ahead";
- "I'm just going through the paces, I'm bored"; or
- "Something's missing"?

How many times have you made a similar statement? How fulfilled are you in your current role? Do you feel like you are free to use all of your natural talents and potential in the work you do every day? If you found yourself in one of my lectures, would you raise your hand?

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the Harris Poll, visit [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com).

Over the past ten years, I've seen so many people suffering from the same kinds of issues that eventually I gave it a name. Now I just refer to it as *The Problem*. The formal definition of The Problem is “a growing trend of people who feel unfulfilled in their roles and dissatisfied and frustrated with results or success.”

Regardless of the level of performance, any individual who feels unable to improve for long enough will start to become uninspired, impassionate and dissatisfied with their performance. They will eventually begin to suffer from The Problem.

Today, too many people are suffering from The Problem. And, given the increasing frequency and globalization of this problem, I decided to try to find out what was behind it in the first place. I wanted to better understand the differences between those who did and did not suffer from The Problem. Why did some, despite great effort, constantly struggle to achieve moderate levels of performance and success, while others achieved significantly more success much more frequently and with less effort and frustration?

I knew I had to find some answers. Otherwise, more Linas of the world would be dreading Mondays, and more people would be leaving their hands on their laps and their true potential unrealized.

And so was born the Genius Project.

*~ The Problem is an epidemic of people who feel frustrated and dissatisfied with their own performance and success. ~*

**R Chapter 1 Review**

- “The Problem” is an epidemic of people that feel unfulfilled, dissatisfied and frustrated with their performance.

**CG Chapter 1 Gut Check**

How fulfilled are you? Many times people have a passionate reason for getting into a line of work, but then something happens. Things get added. You take on new roles and new responsibilities, and before you know it you are off course. These new additions are like tiny steps, each one taking them just a little bit further away from their original objective. Because these steps are so tiny, and because they are often driven by positive desires, they are easy to miss. But they add up, and the next thing you know you are way off course. In the military, we had a term for getting off-course like this. We called it “Mission Creep.”

Have you gotten off course? Has your original objective grown into something you don’t recognize or like anymore? When you stop to look up, are you where you thought you would be, or wanted to be, five years ago?

How far have you crept from where you intended to be? (circle one)

*Very far away*   1   2   3   4   5   *Right where I want to be*

To help you determine how significant The Problem may or may not be for you, please go online now and take the first Genius Action Step. If you haven’t set up your account, please do that first, then you can complete this short exercise to help you assess objectively just how satisfied you are with your own level of performance and how fulfilled you feel in your roles.



**Genius Action Step 1:** Please log into your WYG Online workbook and complete the Problem Pre-Assessment.

## **"The Problem" Self-assessment results**

Now that you have completed Genius Action Step #1, let's go over what the results mean. This self-assessment has eight categories designed to help create a comprehensive overview of your level of satisfaction in life. Some of the categories covered are things we have not yet discussed, but it's good that we gather them all at the same time, up front, to get the most objective and unbiased opinion possible. Those categories are:

- Self-awareness—How aware are you of your talents and non-talents?
- Authenticity—How true to those talents are you in your roles and work?
- Level of Performance—At what level do you feel you are performing?
- Self-Direction—How clear is your vision for where you want to go?
- Role Awareness—How well do you understand your roles in life?
- Self-Belief—How much belief do you have in your ability to succeed?
- Effort/Ease—How much effort do you have to put in to get results?
- Levels of Satisfaction—How satisfied are you with your overall success?

Your assessment gives you an overall score for each category. If you scored less than four (4) on the overall score then The Problem is a significant one for you, and the lessons in this book will be significant for you. If you scored less than four in any single category, then that category should become a primary focus in the exercises to come. To that end, I recommend that you print a copy of this self-assessment out so you can refer back to it from time to time throughout the rest of this book.

Simply put, the lower you scored on the Problem Pre-Assessment, the more you probably need this book.

*Note: If you know someone whom you think is also suffering from The Problem, you can invite him or her to take the same self-assessment for free. Check out the “share with a friend” button online.*

# The Genius Project

Michael Lorelli is one of those guys who some might like to hate, and I mean this in the kindest of ways. I'm sure, like all of us, Michael has had his share of failures, but overall he is a guy who has managed to succeed more often than not. You could say it has become a way of life for him. At the age of 18 he earned his private pilot's license in just three weeks. He finished his MBA at NYU in twelve months. He has been the Chief Marketing Officer at PepsiCo, President of PepsiCo East and President of Pizza Hut's international division, finding significant success in each role. He was responsible for the first-ever commercial advertisement on the sails of a boat in the America's Cup race (thanks to Michael we now can barely make out the shape of a boat behind the flurry of advertisements). He was also the first one ever to put a commercial advertisement in a home video (Paramount's smash hit, *Top Gun* in 1987).

Clearly Michael is a guy who gets things done, and in talking with him I found the exact opposite of what I'd heard from Lina. Here was a person who suffered little to no real frustration, outside of the relatively normal amount we all do at least. He didn't feel unfulfilled

at all, and he certainly didn't think that he put in more effort than he got out in results. Everything I saw in Lina's face was completely absent from Michael's. All the stress, tension, struggles and frustration to feel satisfied and successful that existed in one were absent in the other. What was it then that was different about the two? Both are very intelligent, well educated, in environments that were conducive to success and superior performance...at least for some.

One difference that jumped out at me was that Michael was quick to say that he has always been *true* to himself. He has always lead from his gut and gone with his natural talents instead of having to depend on his weaknesses. When he has been *true* to his natural talents he has found that success came more naturally, but when he has been *untrue* to himself success has eluded him.

Remember Lina's comments about not feeling that her role allowed her to be true to herself? Michael felt that the exact opposite was the case in his life. This *authenticity* that Michael described is something we found to be common among the most successful people we studied and least common among those who suffered from the problem. It actually turns out to be one of the core findings of the research and central themes of this book.

## **The Genius Project**

The Genius Project was originally only the nickname for the study we started in 2000 called the *Innermetrix Comparative Performance Study* (now you see why we decided to stick with the nickname!). This study spanned seven years, involved 197,000 individuals across twenty-three countries, and was designed to identify any causes that might explain the difference between the best and the rest. In our effort to understand the differences between these two groups, each individual was given a scientifically validated instrument called the Attribute Index<sup>2</sup>. This profile measured each individual's ability in a wide variety of attributes relevant to individual performance. These attributes are naturally occurring talents that people possess based on

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<sup>2</sup> To receive your own free Genius Profile, visit [www.whatsyourgenius.com](http://www.whatsyourgenius.com).

how they think and make decisions. The science behind this profile has been rigorously validated, and proven through its use in business for more than fifty years.

We also chose these attributes because we, as a company, had lots of experience with them. This is important when you are trying to understand what these data are telling you. We already had over seventy-five PhDs and 900 certified professional consultants and coaches around the world with the experience and understanding required to accurately administer and interpret the results.<sup>3</sup>

The results of this study are the main underpinnings of this entire book, and the rest of the book will tell you what we found and what you can do to take advantage of this new knowledge to become more successful and satisfied yourself.

## What's a Genius?

*“Genius is the ability to put into effect what is in your mind.”*

~ F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

To be able statistically to compare the differences between the most and least successful people, we needed to separate them into categories of performance. We started with a fairly universal set of four levels of performance:

- 1st Level—below average;
- 2nd Level—average;
- 3rd Level—above average; and
- 4th Level—excellent.

Very early on, however, as we started interviewing people and looking at the best performers, we began to see the need for perhaps yet another level of performance. Those who were describing the absolute

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<sup>3</sup> For corporations interested in learning how to unleash the genius in their organizations, see the resource guide at the back of this book.

best performers were having trouble with the four levels of performance. The interviewees were telling us that these people were better than excellent. You've no doubt seen this yourself. Think of someone who is so damn good at what they do that they are better than "excellent." The word falls short of conveying just how good these people really are.

Time and time again, as we conducted our interviews, the word used to describe these "better than excellent" people was "genius." They would say, "John is so great at seeing the big picture, he is a genius at that," or, "Mary is an absolute genius when it comes to understanding the client's problem."

Because we heard this talk of "better than excellent" so much, we decided to add another level of performance on top of excellent. This became the 5th Level of performance, and because we heard the word genius so many times, that became the nickname for this new level.

The revised rankings then became:

- 1st Level—below average;
- 2nd Level—average;
- 3rd Level—above average;
- 4th Level—excellent; and
- **5th Level—genius.**

When I say "Genius," by the way, I'm not referring to a person's IQ. My use of the word has nothing to do with how intelligent a person is, but everything to do with how well he or she performs. Genius in this sense is descriptive of a person's ability to perform, due to his or her own natural talents.

Someone once asked me, "Not everyone can be a genius right?" My answer to this question was a definitive "yes, everyone can be a genius—they just need to figure out how and at what." I truly believe that anyone can indeed be a genius at something; the trick is to figure out at what. That might be a genius surgeon or genius sales person or architect, but that might also mean a genius auto mechanic or genius server in a restaurant or even a genius janitor. The descriptor "Genius" doesn't have to be used only for high profile or high paid roles. It isn't

reserved for celebrities, artists or scientists alone. Somewhere out there is someone doing a job that no one would normally associate with a genius, but any role that exists can be fulfilled at a genius level.

But yes, even geniuses have bad days or weeks or even years. Even the best can't deliver genius-level performance all the time at everything they do. Our lives and our roles are constantly changing. We grow into new duties and responsibilities. We outgrow roles and employers. When such changes occur, even geniuses can struggle with delivering peak performance.

The geniuses I interviewed would be the first to admit that they have had lots of roles in their lives in which they were not able to be geniuses. What differentiates them from non-geniuses, though, is that they realize this fact and don't allow themselves to take up permanent residence in those roles.

Their willingness to try new things, and their ability to recognize that those new things may have been a mistake, are two keys that make them the geniuses they are today.

## The Findings

Before we talk about what we did find in the Genius Project, let's look at what we did not find, because that's actually quite important as well. We wondered if the data would reveal certain natural thinking talents that were only present in the most successful and missing in the rest.

After crunching all of that data, what we did *not* find was a single natural thinking talent that showed up in only the most successful.

It turns out that being better at seeing the big picture (the natural talent known as Conceptual Thinking) is not more likely to make *everyone* successful than is being better at seeing the small picture (the natural talent for Attention to Detail). Neither does being better at understanding others (Empathy) have any greater impact on success *across the board* than does being great at doing what you are told to do (Following Directions).

Sure, in some roles a specific set of talents may be more critical to success than others. We see this all the time with our corporate

clients, but did not find any thinking talents that correlated with success in every role and job.

For example, possessing the natural talents for understanding and persuading others is crucial in most sales roles, but when you look at non-sales roles those talents may have little impact on success. Yes, some natural talents may indeed be vital in certain roles, perhaps even lots of roles, but not in all roles.

That's right. We failed to find any single natural talent that was the key differentiator between success and failure in *all* cases. While this might sound disappointing at first, it's actually great news!

It's great because were this the case, and had we found talents that must be present in order to succeed, you would pretty much be out of luck if you didn't already possess them. You'd be out of luck because natural talents are hard-wired or engrained in how our minds work, and as such, they can't be developed through learning and effort. If we had found certain talents that were mandatory for success in any role, then only people with those talents would be able to become geniuses. But thankfully that's not what we found.

When I say that we didn't find any *natural* talents, however, that doesn't mean we didn't find any correlations at all among the most successful people. It just means that we didn't find any natural talents that correlated. What we *did* find in the Genius Project were two acquired *skills*, and these two skills were present in all of the successful people, and quite absent in those who suffered from The Problem.

Natural talents come from the way your mind is built, and because of this, they do not change much over the course of your life. Skills, on the other hand, are a form of acquired talent. Skills are the knowledge and experience that you learn throughout your life, and they can be developed. If natural talents are engrained in you early on in life, skills are added later. If natural talents are fixed and something you can't develop through conscious effort, skills are the opposite.

As I said, all of this is great news, because it simply means that, regardless of the natural talents you possess, you can take whatever those talents are and become more successful with them. This means that the playing field is level. Genius performance isn't reserved for just

the most intelligent. It isn't just for those who were lucky enough to be born with certain talents. Everyone possesses his or her own unique set of natural talents, so anyone can become a genius at something.

**Natural Talents:** Are your *innate* ability to do something, your natural endowment or aptitude. The key word here is natural. These talents can be physical, as in Lance Armstrong's remarkable lung capacity (a physical talent due to his anatomy and physiology) or they can be mental as in Anthony Robbins' ability to speak and engage people through words (a mental talent due to his high empathetic ability). The natural talents we are concerned with in this book are only those mental ones we all possess. Natural (mental) talents are patterns of thinking and decision-making that you were either born with or that you developed very early on in life.

Based on your genetics and the way your brain is structured, you are naturally good at seeing certain things, while you may be completely blind to others. Those things you see clearly are your natural talents, whereas those things you do not see clearly are your non-talents. We all have our own unique mix of these two. Your set of natural talents is unique to you. In the entire world, no two people possess the exact same set or level of natural thinking talents.

**Acquired Skills:** Unlike natural talents, skills are those abilities that we *can* acquire or develop. These are the knowledge and experience we gain throughout life. The person who doesn't possess a natural talent for empathy may, through lots of reading and training, become somewhat competent at being sensitive to needs and emotions of others. The person who isn't naturally good at seeing the big, strategic view may take classes on strategic planning and become somewhat proficient in that area.

The sales person who learns the technical steps of the sale and the features, functions and benefits of the product has a form of acquired skill for selling. The airline pilot who has learned the principles of flight and aerodynamics has an acquired skill for flying. The differences between acquired skills and natural talents, however, are significant, and having one without the other will never deliver 5th-level performance.

The sales person who has acquired knowledge and experience only has one half of the picture. If he doesn't possess the natural talents for being aggressive, persistent or empathetic, then all that acquired talent may be for naught. If he isn't aggressive enough, then he won't apply the necessary steps of the sale when he needs to. If he isn't persistent enough, he is likely not to get past the gatekeeper to talk to the key decision-maker in the first place.

Without the natural talents to support him, all of his skills will not make him a genius at what he does. What success he does achieve will be like the student in that difficult class who struggles to get results. He may get them, but not easily, not passionately, not consistently and not without feeling like he has to put in a lot more effort than what he gets out in results.

I fly a lot, and I'm glad that the pilots who fly me around the world have the skills for knowing how to actually pilot a Boeing 777 from Hartsfield to Heathrow. But I would not want to fly with someone who didn't also have the natural talents for decisiveness, intuitive decision-making and an ability called compartmentalization that the best pilots possess. Being technically proficient is important, but in the moment when the left engine goes out and the pilot has seconds to react, if he lacks the natural talents to go along with his acquired knowledge and skill, I wouldn't want to be on that plane with him.

Every role is different, as is every person who fills it, but the one thing we've learned in this study is that without natural talents, performance will be hindered. Every role, in order to be performed at genius levels, requires that the right natural talent be present. The 5th level of performance is impossible without natural talents.

Now that you understand the difference between natural talents and acquired skills, here are the two skills we discovered in the study. They are called *self-awareness* and *authenticity*.

### **Acquired Skill #1. Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness looks at how aware people are of their own natural thinking talents. For example, does John know he has a great natural

talent for strategic thinking that makes him a genius for seeing the big picture and making accurate, long-range plans? How aware is Mary that her greatest natural talent is in empathizing and understanding others? Self-awareness also looks at how well a person understands where he or she does not have a natural talent (i.e. their non-talents). So, while John knows he has a natural talent for strategic thinking, is he also aware that paying attention to details or being empathetic are not two of his strongest talents?

Many people make a common mistake in assuming that self-awareness is automatic. They think, “Surely if you possess some natural talent, you must be aware of it right?” Unfortunately, this is simply not the case. Just because someone has a natural ability for something doesn’t ensure that they fully appreciate it. Being self-aware is more than simply thinking, “I could do that.” Being self-aware requires a much deeper understanding for the way you think and make decisions and the natural talents you possess as a result.

Being self-aware is being aware of your own true potential, which is a beautiful thing. In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby is described as having, “something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life.” When people have high levels of self-awareness, they too seem to hold a heightened sensitivity to all the promise they contain. They know very well what they are and are not good at, and what potential lies within them.

If self-awareness deals with the knowledge you have for your natural talents, then the second acquired skill deals with how you apply those talents. We call this skill *authenticity*.

## **Acquired Skill #2. Authenticity**

Authenticity, at its simplest level, is “being true to you.” Being self-aware is only half the picture. Properly applying that knowledge to your life is the other half. Setting goals that capitalize on your natural talents is “being authentic.” Finding a job that depends primarily on your natural talents is “being authentic.” Working from your strengths is “being authentic.”

The opposite of being authentic is being inauthentic. Whether you are aware of your natural thinking talents or not, whenever you fail to properly incorporate them into what you do and how you do it, you are being inauthentic. When you allow yourself to fill a role that requires natural talents that you don't possess (but hope to develop), you are being inauthentic.

Of all the people we studied, the only two things that turned out to be really different between the most successful and the rest were their level of understanding for their natural talents and their ability to act on these talents—to incorporate them into what they do and how they do it.

The message in this study then becomes: the more completely you know your own natural talents (i.e. are self-aware), and the truer you are to those talents (i.e. are authentic), the greater your satisfaction and performance will be.

Figure 1 below demonstrates the simplicity of this concept.

Philosopher G.E. Moore put it as simply as anyone when he said, "Everything is what it is, and not another thing." In other words, we are what we are, and not what we are not. We are our natural talents and our non-talents, and the more aware of these we are—the truer we are to this fact—the better we perform. Trying to be something we are not is fruitless. If your natural talent is not for strategic thinking, then the more your success depends on this ability, the more you are likely to suffer from The Problem.

*~ Only when we are what we are, and our roles and objectives are true to that—only then can we reach the 5th level of performance. ~*

Figure 1. Authentic Performance Model



## A Simple Mistake

The problem, though, is that the vast majority of people assume there is no real difference between talents and skills. They assume that natural talents can be developed through learning, training and hard work. They fail to appreciate just how fixed the neural networks that control these talents really are. Instead, because they fail to differentiate between talents and skills, and because they assume that *both* can be acquired equally, they set about identifying what talents and skills they need for a given role and then start trying to develop them both.

When they do this, they are only halfway successful. They may manage to develop new skills, but they don't develop new talents. They don't change the neural networks that control natural thinking talents. In so doing, they may indeed become one of the most knowledgeable sales people in the company, but they still don't *think* like the great sales people. They become the greatest knowledge expert on the planet for the rules of accounting and the workings of mathematics, but they still don't *think* like the great accountants do. They become the pilot who knows more about the technical manual than the engineer who wrote it, but they still don't meld with the controls and become one with the plane as an extension of their own body, like the great pilots do.

Don't get me wrong. Training and development are vital to success, but by assuming that training and development will develop the natural thinking talents *and* skills they need, many people fail to understand that they are only building up half of the picture. When the other half of the picture isn't there (the natural talents half) they wonder why they continue to struggle. Unfortunately, when people fail to achieve the level of performance they want, the solution is often even more training and knowledge.

People exert a tremendous amount of energy attempting to change themselves in a way that just isn't going to lead to success, when in reality it is the outside world that needs to be changed. That's what geniuses do, they change the world in which their natural talents play.

## The Numbers

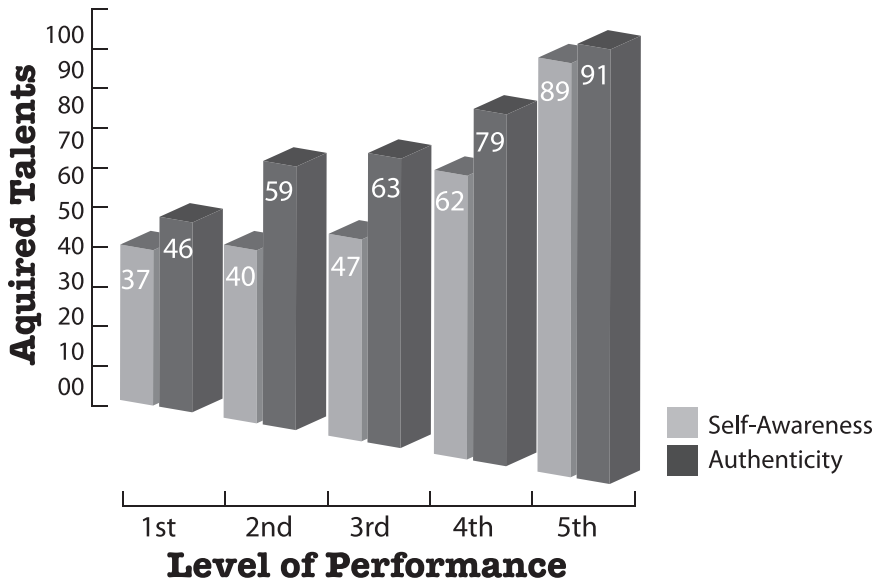
From a purely statistical perspective, the correlations between self-awareness, authenticity and performance are significant:

- The average level of self-awareness for the 5th-level performers in the study was 89%, compared to 62% for the 4th-level performers, and less than 47% for the 1st- through 3rd-level performers;
- Those who were 5th-level performers had levels of authenticity that were 91% versus levels of authenticity seen in the 4th-level performers of 79% and in the 1st- through 3rd-level performers, who were at or below 63%;
- Correlation between self-awareness and performance was  $p = 0.893$ ;<sup>4</sup> and
- Correlation between authenticity and performance was  $p = 0.879$ .

These differences make a very compelling argument for becoming more self-aware and authentic. Figure 1a below shows you just how significant the differences are between the five levels of performance studied.

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<sup>4</sup> A Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation ( $p$ ) above 0.700 is considered to be significant.



These data show us that there is a direct and positive correlation between the two acquired skills of self-awareness and authenticity and performance. Those who performed at the lower levels also had lower levels of self-awareness and authenticity, but the higher the performance went the greater the level of self-awareness and authenticity became.

**R Chapter 2 Review**

Chapter 1:

- “The Problem” is an epidemic of people that feel unfulfilled, dissatisfied and frustrated with their performance.

Chapter 2:

- To find out why, we created the Genius Project, and what we found were two key things:
  - There is no one “Genius Talent”; and
  - Self-Awareness and Authenticity are present in higher levels in the best performers.

**CG Chapter 2 Gut Check**

If you look at the times in your life when you have felt the most passionate, the most fulfilled and the most *natural* at what you were doing, these are probably times when you were being authentic. These are also times when I bet you were much more successful with less effort and stress. Please think of a role, or major aspect of a role, that you have filled in the past that you were passionate about and did very well, and then answer the questions below.

What was this role, and which part of it came naturally for you?

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How comfortable were you at that time? (circle one)

*Very Uncomfortable* 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Comfortable*

How happy were you? (circle one)

*Very Unhappy* 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Happy*

How successful were you? (circle one)

*Very Unsuccessful* 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Successful*

Now think of a role, or major aspect of a role, in which you did not feel this way; where you struggled; where you did not feel passionate about what you were doing, and you did not perform as well as you wanted to. You probably didn't enjoy it, didn't do it well and if you had your druthers, wouldn't do it again. Chances are very good that these were times when you were not being authentic.

In that moment, how were you being inauthentic?

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How comfortable were you at that time? (circle one)

*Very Uncomfortable* 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Comfortable*

How happy were you? (circle one)

*Very Unhappy* 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Happy*

How successful were you? (circle one)

*Very Unsuccessful* 1 2 3 4 5 *Very Successful*

This is just a short little exercise to give you a glimpse of what it feels like to be a Genius every day, because Geniuses find ways to make sure almost everything they do feels like the first set of questions. They always strive to be authentic. The question to you is, "Would you rather create a life where you feel like the first scenario all the time, or would you rather continue to experience lots of the second scenario?" As you will see, the choice is yours alone.

