

IKIGAI



生き甲斐

I worked in Japan for JWT back in the nineties. The Japanese really are the world's last great tribe. As they experienced a long period of relative isolation from the outside world—caused by sakoku or “closed country”, the isolationist foreign policy of the Japanese Tokugawa shogunate. They've developed their own unique set of values and beliefs. The one I find most relevant to the life of a creative director is the concept of ikigai.



Ikigai can be roughly translated to “reason for being.”

生き - Life

甲斐 - Effect / Result / Worth

Essentially, your ikigai is your purpose.

The meaning in your life.

What makes all the bullshit you go through worthwhile.

Each person's ikigai is personal to them and specific to their lives. It reflects your inner self and creates a mental state in which you feel most at ease. It is not linked to your financial, marital or societal status. When you find your ikigai, it gives a sense of meaning to your life. The French have a similar idea, “raison d'être” literally your reason for being.

It's very similar to the central concept in one of my favourite books, "Man's Search For Meaning" by Viktor Frankl. Frankl was a professor in neurology and psychiatry until he got captured by the Nazis. His adventures make for one of the most powerful books I've ever read. It chronicles his experiences as an Auschwitz concentration camp inmate during WW2. He's caged, tortured, beaten, not given enough food or proper clothing or shoes in freezing temperatures and worked to the brink of death. He's subjected to vermin, frostbite and disease.

He paints a truly horrific existence of his day to day camp life. Every day, he saw friends and family drop dead all around him from disease, starvation or be executed for no reason at all. His mother, father, brother, and wife were all killed in the camps. With all this in mind, how could he find life worth preserving? How could he make sense of this? How could he find his ikigai?



Viktor Frankl

His idea is that you have to find meaning in suffering. As Nietzsche says, "he who has a WHY to live for can bear almost any HOW". Even though Frankl was living in extremely difficult circumstances and had been stripped of almost all his humanity, he noticed something. His ability to find meaning in even the direst of circumstances helped him to survive. He noticed two types of prisoners; those that had lost faith, meaning and hope in the future. And those that didn't.



They were the ones that looked at life as a challenge to be overcome. The ones who had a WHY to live or more likely to survive. He discovered that in life you can either make a victory of your experiences or you can ignore the challenge and simply fade away. Ask yourself, do you have a strong WHY in your life?

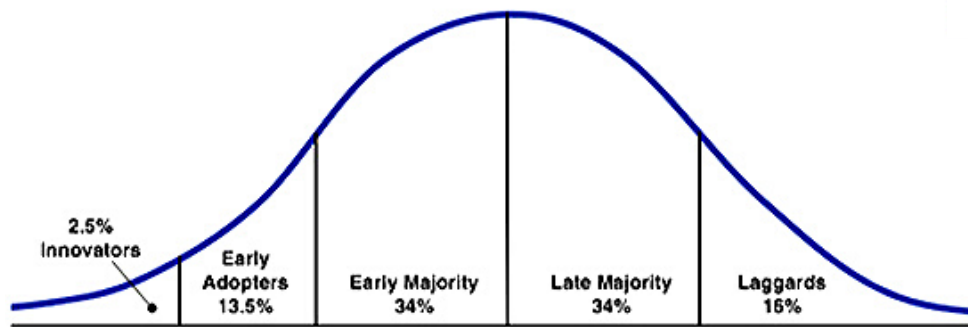
Think about your WHY. Every single person, every single organization on the planet knows what they do. Many know how they do it. Whether you call it your differentiated value proposition, your proprietary process or your USP. But very few people or organizations know WHY they do what they do. And by WHY, I don't mean "to make money." That's a result. It's always a result. By WHY, I mean, "what's your purpose? What's your cause? What's your belief? Why do you get out of bed in the morning? And why should anyone care?"

People respond to why you do what you do.



They can smell passion, intention and purpose. If you don't know why you do what you do, how will you ever get people to positively respond to you. Vote for you? Or buy something from you? Or, more importantly, be loyal and want to be a part of what it is that you do? The goal is not just to sell to people who need what you have. The goal is to sell to people who believe what you believe. The goal is not just to hire people who need a job. It's to hire people who believe what you believe. If you hire people just because they can do a job, they'll work for your money. But if they believe what you believe, they'll work for you with blood and sweat and tears. People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it. If you talk about what you believe, you will attract those who believe what you believe.

Now why is it important to attract those who believe what you believe? Something called the **Law of Diffusion of Innovation**. If you don't know the law, you know the terminology. The first 2.5% of our population are our innovators. The next 13.5% of our population are our early adopters. The next 34% are your early majority, your late majority and your laggards.



We all sit at various places at various times on this scale, but what this principle tells us is that if you want mass-market success or mass-market acceptance of an idea, you cannot have it until you achieve this tipping point between 15 and 18 percent market penetration, and then the system tips.

The problem is: How do you find the ones that get it before doing business versus the ones who don't get it? So it's this here, this little gap that you have to close. It's known in marketing speak as "**Crossing the Chasm**". The early majority will not try something until someone else has tried it first. The innovators and the early adopters, they're comfortable making those gut decisions. They're more likely to take those intuitive decisions that are driven by what they believe about the world and not just what product is available. These are the people who stood in line for six hours to buy an iPhone when they first came out, when you could have bought one off the shelf the next week. They didn't do it because the technology was so great; they did it for themselves. It's because they wanted to be first. People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it. And what you do simply proves what you believe. People will do the things that prove what they believe.

IS YOUR 'WHY' STRONG ENOUGH TO GET YOU THROUGH ANY CHALLENGE.

What are you living for? What is your purpose?

I challenge you to sit back and reflect on that and think about that deeply. In Victor's case, he thought of future lectures that he would be giving based on his experiences. In doing so, his current life experiences became more objective. He looked at them as learning events. He believed, "suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds meaning". To him, suffering became a task that he didn't turn his back on. He embraced it and realized the hidden opportunities for achievement. He had a strong why. Do you look for the why behind a tough situation? Or do you just complain about it? So many of us suffer from existential frustration in our existence. We're bored and without meaning we become frustrated with life.

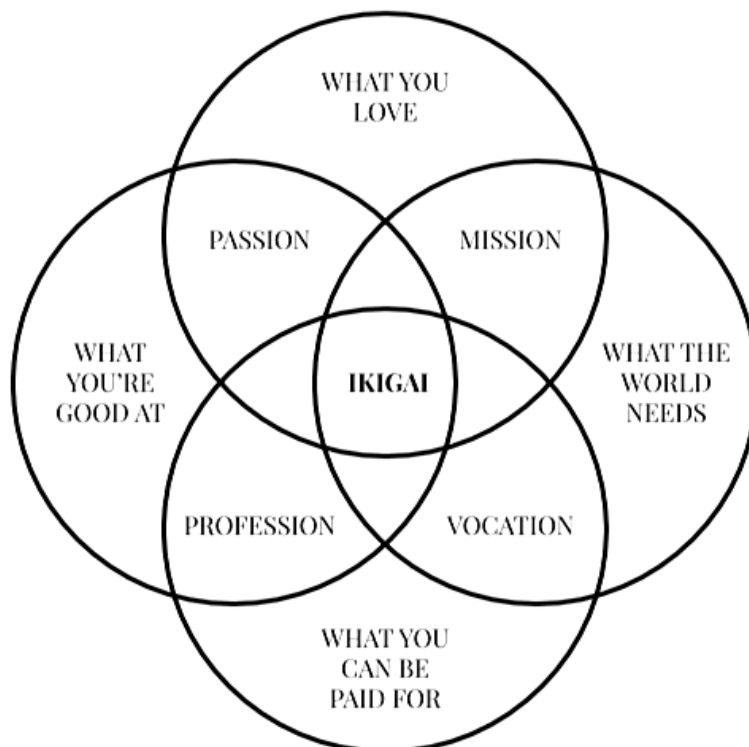


This can cause an array of issues like depression, anxiety and addiction. Victor Frankl's take on it was that you have to find meaning in your life. You have to find a purpose, something bigger than yourself. Searching for your meaning can bring intention. That's natural and necessary. Struggling to achieve a goal is normal and natural.

You'll find your ikigai by reflecting on four simple questions.

- WHAT YOU LOVE?
- WHAT YOU'RE GOOD AT?
- WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS?
- WHAT YOU CAN BE PAID FOR?

The drop this into this diagram..... and BINGO!
You have your ikigai.



Really what's so fascinating to me is that you wouldn't expect ikigai to have such a profound impact on how your brain actually works. Here are some of the advantages of having a clearly defined ikigai.

Ikigai reduces anxiety:

research shows that the feeling of ikigai contributes to a well-balanced secretion of neurotransmitters such as serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins, which in turn reduces the feeling of stress.

Ikigai is good for your heart:

scientists in Japan found evidence that people with a low sense of ikigai had a higher overall mortality risk, mostly due to higher cardiovascular disease.

Ikigai increases your personal power:

doctors report that people without ikigai have a strong need for approval from others, while those with ikigai tend to perform tasks for their own satisfaction.

Ikigai makes you more resilient:

psychologists suggests that ikigai may help you go through times of hardship more easily, making you feel like it's worthwhile to continue living.

Ikigai helps you live longer:

another study identified ikigai as a positive psychological factor contributing to longevity, with men and women with a sense ikigai showing decreased risks of mortality from all causes—meaning they lived longer lives.

There's much more to it... I got most of this from the wonderful [THE LITTLE BOOK OF IKIGAI](#) by Ken Mogi.

WANT MORE OF THE GOOD STUFF?

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AND GET YOUR NEXT TREATMENT PITCH PERFECT.

[Ghosttreatments.com](https://ghosttreatments.com)