

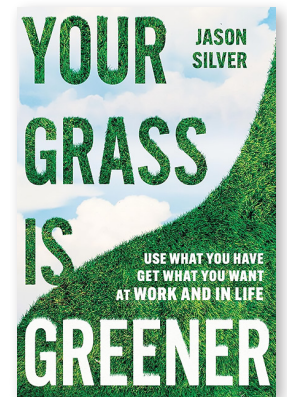


Executive Book Summaries®

Your Grass Is Greener

Use What You Have. Get What You Want.
At Work and in Life.

by **Jason Silver**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

The old saying that the grass is always greener on the other side captures a familiar frustration at work: the belief that fulfillment, balance, or success lies somewhere else, in a different role, company, or career. Many professionals feel stuck between wanting more satisfaction and fearing the cost of chasing it. But what if job satisfaction was a skill that can be practiced and mastered, just like any other skill?

Your Grass Is Greener: Use What You Have. Get What You Want. At Work and In Life. argues that lasting improvement does not come from changing jobs, but from changing how you work. Drawing on his experience as a startup advisor and public speaker, author Jason Silver shows how people can use strengths they already possess to improve efficiency, reduce stress, and enjoy their work more.

The focus is on practical tactics such as improving communication, speeding decision-making, and aligning daily tasks with what you do best—methods that help you become more effective without sacrificing your life outside the office. These tactics are designed to be applied immediately, using strengths and habits you already have rather than requiring sweeping changes or major trade-offs. As work improves, success follows more naturally, and the resulting confidence and satisfaction spill over into personal life as well. Over time, these small, controllable changes compound, creating a more sustainable and rewarding way to work and live.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY

- Learn how to improve job satisfaction without changing roles or employers
- Find out how to use existing skills to work more efficiently and with less stress
- Examine practical methods to reduce miscommunication and progress faster at work
- Acquire a mindset shift that turns everyday work into a source of life satisfaction

Introduction

Shortly before her 37th birthday, my sister lost her battle with cancer. Losing Rachel sent me into a spiral. I fell to pieces, slowly picked them all back up again, and through her death have been learning more about how to better live my own life. I challenged every assumption I had about how I was living and focused on my own well-being more than I ever had before.

Over time I started to feel better in life and turned my attention to work. A similar deep dive upended everything I thought I knew about how I was supposed to work, and in the process, helped me find a better way. One that allows me to continue to work hard, but enjoy myself more along the way.

How to Work—and Live—Better

Research has shown that enjoying your job isn't just a nice perk. The more you enjoy your work, the better you do at it. You're more creative and you build better relationships with your colleagues too. Studies also show that the joy you feel at your job spills into the rest of your life. When you enjoy your work, you have more energy for everything else. Simply put, working better is the key to unlocking a better life.

Workplace statistics paint a clear picture: the way we're working today isn't working.

- Productivity is lower than ever.
- About 8 in 10 people have burned out at least once at their current job.
- 77% of employees feel disengaged from work.
- The "Great Resignation" and "quiet quitting" have become so popular as to be routinely newsworthy.

If, like so many others, you're struggling at your job today, know that you can turn it around. Whatever job you have and however it's going for you today, finding ways to work better will bring you big benefits both at the office and outside of it.

The Secret to Better Work

Work smarter, not harder.

Does anyone even know what that actually means? Are you waking up every day trying to work dumb? No, you're not. The problem isn't you or what you're capable of; it's that no one has ever really explained *how* you're supposed to work smarter at work.

This book breaks down nine of the most impactful tactics for working better across these three opportunity areas:

- How to do five days of work in four (without working until midnight)
- How to enjoy your day-to-day work more (without changing jobs)
- How to progress faster without (waiting for a title or promotion)

What you'll learn works because each tactic is focused entirely on what you control—no waiting for your boss to approve a new project, spending months interviewing for a "dream job" that may never come, or holding yourself back anymore.

CHAPTER 1

How to Eliminate Miscommunication

Miscommunication in the workplace costs the US economy upward of \$1.2 trillion every year. Aside from productivity, miscommunicating just feels bad. A recent study showed that most employees (69%) can point to a specific, recent miscommunication at work that left them feeling more stressed or anxious.

When one of my favorite campaigns we ran at Airbnb resulted in a scheduling error involving the NBA, the NHL, and Bruce Springsteen, I realized this was because I'd made a classic blunder of communication: I assumed others had interpreted my words how I'd intended them to be interpreted. I'd forgotten one of the most obvious and important rules of communication—different people hear the same words differently. Why does this happen?

The answer is obvious, yet all too often forgotten. We're all different from each other. We all think differently. We all hear things differently. Different people can hear the exact same instructions and produce completely different results.

The problem isn't if you're understood, it's *how* the other person understands you. There are two types of miscommunication:

- **Visible miscommunications** – occur when you speak and can immediately tell you're not being understood. The other person looks at you funny or replies to your email with a confused emoji. So, in the moment, you reword your message and try again.
- **Invisible miscommunications** – occur without your awareness. They happen when you've been understood

Enjoying your day-to-day work is a self-reinforcing multiplier for your career.



but misinterpreted. These are the miscommunications that cost us because you only discover them after you've wasted time and effort going in the wrong direction.

Solving for invisible miscommunications in the moment, before the wasted work and effort, is where you can get back hours every week.

The Solution to Invisible Miscommunications

To stop invisible miscommunications, you have to find a way to make them visible. You want to make them obvious in advance so you can fix them before paying the price of doing the wrong work. Using the brief back, a proven communication tactic, can help here.

The brief back asks a listener to repeat back what they heard in their own words. This immediately reveals whether an invisible miscommunication has taken place. You will unquestionably know how the other person interpreted your meaning because they'll have just told you.

There are basically two approaches to deploying brief backs: the safe way and the asshole way. Consider these examples:

1. "Tell me what I just told you. I want to make sure you were listening."
2. "Can you let me know what you took away from this conversation so I can be sure I did a good job getting my point across?"

Guess which one works better?

Option 1 is condescending, passive-aggressive, and rude. I don't recommend asking for brief backs this way. From much trial and error, I learned that the key when asking for a brief back is to focus on yourself, not on the other person.

The brief back should confirm that *you* did a good job of communicating, not that the other person did a good job listening. The idea is that if something went wrong then it's on you, not them.

Notice the focus of Option 2: "I can be sure I did a good job." This clearly signals to the other person that you're looking for feedback on the job you did and not checking on something they did or didn't do. I've rarely if ever seen anyone have an issue with being asked for a brief back.

CHAPTER 2

How to Speed Up Slow Decision-Making

How many times have you felt frustrated with slow decision making at work? You know what you need to do, but you're stuck waiting around for someone else to make a decision so you can move forward. Or you get called into a meeting to discuss a topic that should have been decided days, if not weeks, ago.

It feels like the more people involved in a decision, the more it seems to slowly grind to a halt. But do more people always mean you'll move more slowly? Too many cooks in the kitchen isn't the problem. Teams can make good decisions quickly, even big teams.

As humans, we want to agree with one another because we care so deeply about getting along. Our brains are wired for consensus. Yet we're actively building teams that create more controversy.

As we add more people to our teams and they bring a greater diversity of thought, we are actually creating the conditions for more disagreement. We need diversity, but with diversity necessarily comes differences of opinion. Left unaddressed, this is what slows down decision-making.

So, the question is: How do you adapt your decision-making approach to leverage the superpower of diversity without the slowdown of always having to agree?

For Faster Decisions, Learn to Disagree Better

Though it might feel somewhat paradoxical, better disagreement leads to faster decisions. Here's the secret: your team can be in alignment without being in agreement. Faster decision-making happens not in spite of disagreements, but *because* of them.

The following three essential tactics can help you productively disagree so you can make decisions faster as a team:

1. Decide who decides

Always stop and ask, "Who is making this decision?" before diving into the decision itself. This single tactic alone will save you hours of wasted effort. You'll be surprised how often

the actual decision maker isn't clear and how much faster you'll move once your team has that clarity.

2. Collect context, not opinions

Groupthink refers to the challenges we face making decisions in group settings. To make good decisions at pace, your goal is to collect the diverse context of what everyone is thinking while reducing the probability of bad decisions from groupthink. Since it's subconscious, you can't entirely stop groupthink from happening. You can, however, rethink what you and others say to reduce the likelihood that it occurs.

3. Seek alignment, not agreement

Great teams can recognize genuine disagreements and decide to move forward together anyway. The idea is to share your thinking and argue vehemently, but once a decision is made, support it as if it were your own. This tactic may be the most difficult because it requires you to hold two competing points of view in mind at the same time: that you disagree with a decision and *fully* support it.

CHAPTER 3

How to Take Back Control of Your Time

How often in your life and at work do you put other people's requests above your own? How long does it take before your week gets away from you and you have no time left for what *you* need to get done?

We all know we need to say *no* more, but it's really hard. No one ever explains how to do it well. What if you could learn to say *no* more effectively, with less guilt and less fear of judgment from others?

Why You Don't Say No as Often as You Should

You, me, and anyone else with a human brain pretty much sucks at estimating how long a task will take. Psychologists call it the *planning fallacy*, and it effectively means we expect to get way more done than we actually can. How often do you get through a day or a week with a completely finished to-do list?

Thanks to the planning fallacy, most of us take on too much, setting ourselves up for failure and over allocating our time before a week has even begun.

Conventional wisdom tells you to focus on your methodology—to optimize your time better—but the key to better prioritization isn't methodology; it's psychology. It's a mind-

set shift to focus on *what you won't do* that makes you more effective at what you will do.

It's incredibly hard to intentionally not do something. The same is true at work. Even when you tell yourself not to, you still wind up checking your email in a meeting or letting a "quick" conversation expand into an hour-long, off-topic brainstorm. It's much more difficult to have the discipline not to do these things.

Your to-do list doesn't tell you what not to do. Shifting your mindset to focus on clearly defining what you won't do is exactly what you need to make more progress on what you will do. When you know what not to do, you're better able to avoid distractions and stay focused on what matters most. It's also easier to take much-needed breaks because you know when you've done enough.

Write a Not-To-Do List

If you plan to take on too much before your week even begins, it's only going to go downhill from there. That's why we're going to take your existing to-do list and complement it with a not-to-do list.

To set yourself up for a great week, open up your long to-do list and spend fifteen minutes first thing on Monday doing this:

1. Pick your top three most important priorities. *You only get three.*
2. Put everything else on your not-to-do list. *Yes, everything else.*
3. Only add more to your to-do list if your schedule is wide open after blocking out time for your top three priorities. *Remember the planning fallacy: your top priorities will take longer than you expect.*

Having so few to-dos and so many not-to-dos will probably make you feel like you're going to underachieve at first, but your results will tell a different story. Clearly articulating your non-priorities in a not-to-do list helps you keep focused and has a number of bonus benefits as well:

- Your mental health will improve.
- Your expectation management will improve
- Your organizational skills will improve.

The purpose of upfront clarity is to help you be more intentional throughout the week.

As requests and tasks come up throughout the week, compare them against what you've already written down. If it's

If you want lasting happiness and more joy on the job, you have to focus on improving how you work and not just what you're working on. ”

on your not-to-do list, then don't do it. If it's something you think you need to do, go for it. But before you do, choose what it will replace on your to-do list. Don't just add it on top of everything else.

CHAPTER 4

How to Promote the Imposter in You

When you feel the self-doubt of imposter syndrome, you might see it as a problem—something you need to get rid of to feel better. That doesn't work. Imposter syndrome isn't a light switch you can turn on and off.

When you try to ignore the feeling that you don't belong, it usually feels worse and you perform worse as well. That's why we're going to completely flip the script. You'll learn how to use the same imposter syndrome that feels like it's holding you back as the very thing that propels you toward more impact and a deeper feeling that you do belong.

You've experienced imposter syndrome if you've ever:

- felt self-doubt
- had trouble acknowledging your success
- been worried that you'll be exposed as a fraud because you're not as good as other people think you are

The textbook definition of imposter syndrome adds that these feelings happen despite verifiable and objective evidence of your success.

When you try to turn your self-doubt off, you usually wind up feeling worse. Stop trying to fix it. There's more to imposter syndrome than what prevailing wisdom would have you believe. It's not some bug in your source code that needs to be corrected. It's a feature to be embraced. When you stop trying to turn it off, imposter syndrome can bring you benefits rather than burnout.

Research has shown that when you experience imposter syndrome, you tend to compensate by becoming more "other-focused." You listen better and ask more questions. When you do, you become more interpersonally effective and people like working with you more. In other words, the very concerns you have about not belonging help you build more

belonging. The right amount of imposter syndrome makes you a better teammate.

The Question Is the Answer

Researchers at Harvard University found that people like you better when you ask more questions. When people like you better, you'll feel a greater sense of belonging.

Despite their superpower, most of us don't recognize questions as the pathway to interpersonal success. We don't ask enough questions. Instead, we have it backward. We tend to focus more on answers, thinking this will make us seem smarter and more valuable. But answers aren't better.

What really has value in workplaces today is figuring out the *right questions to ask*. Not only do great questions pave the way for great answers, but they're also one of the best ways to learn and build relationships.

Research found that follow-up questions consistently performed the best in terms of how much they make people like you. Follow-ups encourage people to elaborate their points while showing your colleagues that you are listening to them. You can't ask a follow-up question if you weren't listening in the first place, so when you ask one, you're sending a strong signal that you were paying attention.

CHAPTER 5

How to Measure Your Joy on the Job

Enjoying what you do at work isn't just important because it feels good. Research has shown that when you enjoy your job, you have more impact, are more creative, and you build better relationships with your colleagues.

Enjoying your day-to-day work is a self-reinforcing multiplier for your career. The more you enjoy your job, the more impact you have. The more impact you have, the more you'll enjoy your job. And so it goes, onward and upward from there.

Work joy also spills outside of the office into your life overall. When you feel good at work, you feel better across the rest of your life as well.

You're Measuring the Wrong Variable

Hedonic adaptation is our shared, human tendency to revert to a base level of happiness following any meaningful event. Like getting a big promotion or landing that fancy new job you've always wanted, winning the lottery is a milestone. Just think about your last major win at your job. I bet you felt great. Did you feel the same way the next day? The next week? At your next performance review? That's hedonic adaptation at work—and it's why milestones are the wrong variable to focus on.

I firmly believe that anyone can experience more joy in their job, but we have to flip our notions of what leads to more enjoyment. Generally, we all focus on career milestones. You think about the goals you want to achieve, the promotions you plan to land, and the projects you'll need to work on to get there. If you want lasting happiness and more joy on the job, you have to focus on improving how you work, not just what you're working on.

Do You Enjoy Your Moments?

When you're asked "Do you enjoy your job?" your brain plays a trick on you. A growing body of literature shows that humans are quite inaccurate at recalling how they've felt in the past. It's called *affect recall bias*.

This is another reason why traditional performance reviews don't help you do anything about your on-the-job experience. Broad reflections over long time periods don't match how you actually feel about your work day-to-day. If you really want to know if you're enjoying your job, you need to measure your moments and ask yourself how you're feeling as close to your day-to-day experience as possible.

CHAPTER 6

How to Unlock More Joy at Your Job

The reason why many people don't like their work as much as they could is because they're not doing their work in the best way *for them*. Forget working on best practices. You need to find the practices that work best for you. When you do, you can use what you're already great at to find more enjoyment in the job you already have.

If you're going to find and keep on a path that makes you happier at work, you're going to need something to help you find your way. To discover your optimal professional path, you need a career compass.

A career compass reorients you toward how to enjoy your job every day. When you have a task to complete, each of the four points of the compass will show you how to get your job done in a way you'll both enjoy and excel at. When you can apply at least one of the points, you're in good shape. Two will feel great. Three will feel even better. And employing all four will reward you with maximum enjoyment on the job. Here are the four points of your career compass:

- **Love.** The more you do what you love, the better it will be for you personally and professionally.
- **Leverage.** The more you use skills you're already great at, the better you'll do and feel.
- **Learn.** The more you improve skills you care about, the more you'll enjoy your job, and the better you'll get at it too.
- **Less.** The more you avoid what you don't love doing, aren't great at, and have no interest in improving, the better you'll feel.

For a career compass to be applicable to your day-to-day tasks, you'll need to customize the four cardinal points so they relate to what's unique about you.

Keeping on Your Path

Be present. Stay in the moment.

There's a reason for these sayings. Studies show that you're happiest (and most effective) when you're focused on the here and now. Though you likely know what sayings like *be in the moment* mean, figuring out how to apply them is much harder.

You can use your compass to help you stay in the moment. Anytime you get a new task, use your compass to figure out how to make it happen. When you find yourself getting distracted away from your day-to-day work—stressing about milestones, worrying that you're doing things differently than everyone else around you, or simply disliking what you're doing—you can again turn to your compass and let it guide you back to the best way to work for you.

CHAPTER 7

How to Make Better Decisions

No matter how hard you try, you will never fully control the outcome of your decisions. In fact, the only aspect of the decision-making process you have complete control over is how you make your decisions themselves. When you im-

Ignorance might be bliss,
but it won't make you any better.

”

prove your approach to making decisions, you maximize the chances of getting the outcomes you want.

Your brain *is* a mess of tangled legs, or at least a mess of 100 billion neurons and their 25 quadrillion pathways. With so many routes to take, your brain evolved to find the fastest, easiest way to make decisions.

The problem is that efficient thinking is rarely the most effective thinking. Anytime you're making a decision, your brain is finding ways to skip the hard work. These mental shortcuts are known as *unconscious biases* because you can't know when they are happening to you.

You can't eliminate biases from your thinking entirely, but you can take different approaches to lessen their effects. What you need is a way to step back and force your brain to do something it doesn't want to do—think deeply about your decisions.

Asking the right questions can force your brain to do the right thinking. When you start by evaluating the factors of a decision, you become primed to think more analytically. It's this initial priming that improves your overall decision-making.

Use Factors to Make Better Decisions

Instead of listing pros and cons, list *factors*. A factor doesn't tell you which option is better; it tells you how to think about which option is better. Listing factors will help you think through the important aspects of your decisions while priming your decision-making to be more analytical.

Once you've listed the relevant factors to any decision, you can then use a simple but effective thought routine to make your choice. You can use it for any decision, big or small.

1. List every relevant factor in your decision
2. Make a mini-decision based on each factor alone
3. Make a final decision considering all of the factors together

This routine works because it helps you avoid the mental shortcuts that hurt your decision-making. By listing the relevant factors first, you avoid letting less important information sway your opinion—like how many pros or cons there are. Then, the routine forces you to think deeply about

what decision you would make considering each factor as if it were the only one. Having that thinking done before you holistically consider all factors together will make your final decision better.

CHAPTER 8

How to Get More Feedback

Tough feedback is hard to hear, but it's always better to hear it than not. When you know about it, you can do something about it. Ignorance might be bliss, but it won't make you any better. Research has shown that more feedback helps you learn and develop new skills faster, improves what you're able to achieve, and increases your overall motivation as well. It's also been shown that teams with free-flowing feedback significantly outperform those without.

As conclusive as the evidence is that feedback supercharges people's growth, it's equally clear that most of us aren't getting enough.

Giving feedback comes with social risks, and because we're unsure how someone may take our feedback, we often decide to play it safe and keep it to ourselves. You can be the change you want to see in your workplace by taking the first, sometimes scary, step of giving more feedback to others. The more feedback you give your colleagues, the more of it you will get for yourself.

How to Give More Feedback

- **Give better feedback:** To keep your feedback in a safe zone, steer clear of right and wrong. Don't get into a situation where your comments can be perceived as correct or incorrect, because that's where arguments happen and feelings can get hurt.
- **Give positive feedback:** One of the best ways to give more feedback—especially at first while you're getting used to giving it—is to focus on positive feedback.
- **Ask before you give feedback:** One final tip to help you share more feedback is to ask in advance. Remember, you're almost certainly underestimating someone's desire to hear your feedback. Rather than assume

they don't want to hear what you have to say, ask them and find out for sure.

How to Get More Feedback

As you give more feedback, more of it will naturally come back to you thanks to reciprocity bias. But remember, feedback is just as hard for others to share with you as it is for you to share with them.

- **Ask for feedback in advance:** Asking in advance gives people the chance to prepare and makes it easier for them to share it with you because they know you want to hear it.
- **Listen to understand:** When someone gives you feedback, they're doing something that isn't easy. When receiving feedback, focus on listening and making sure you understand, not debating whether the feedback is justified.
- **Close with gratitude:** Try to end every feedback conversation with gratitude. A simple thank you goes a long way.

CHAPTER 9

How to See Opportunities Everyone Else Misses

The problem is, thanks to confirmation bias and a simple trick of language, we're holding ourselves back every single day without realizing it. Opportunities to advance more quickly, both in terms of professional accomplishment and personal growth, are all around us. We just miss them.

The moment you hear the word *can't*, confirmation bias kicks in. This particular unconscious bias, yet another of the 180 we all have, unknowingly leads you to look for or interpret information that is consistent with what you already believe. Rather than exploring potential, when we hear *can't*, our brains actively avoid the possibility and we move on.

Here's the truth: very few achievements are impossible. But the flip side is this: many achievements aren't feasible.

The key to seeing opportunities others miss is differentiating between possibility and feasibility. People regularly say something *can't* be done when they really mean it *shouldn't* be done. This subtle difference makes all the difference.

The Question You Should Be Asking All the Time

To see opportunities others are missing, ask yourself: What would need to be true?

When you're faced with a hard goal—something that can't be done or an idea someone else thinks is never going to happen—make a conscious effort to stop and think. Move from declarative statements about impossibility to exploratory conversations about feasibility.

This works because that single question shifts your focus from confirming all the reasons an opportunity won't work to exploring the specific details that would need to be true to make it happen. The question forces you to actively consider the possibilities. Once you have a tangible list of what would need to be true, you can more consciously decide what to do next.

CONCLUSION

Gutted, Grateful, and Greener Grass

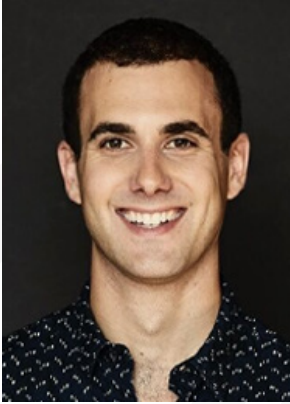
Changing what you do on its own doesn't address the true root challenge if you want to accomplish more and feel better about it along the way. The secret to better work—and a more enjoyable life as a result—is to change *how* you're working. Using the skills you already have to improve the work you already do. This leads to the most lasting change because any improvement in your underlying approach carries forward to the next project, team, or entirely new job you do in the future.

Avoid looking at the grass elsewhere and expecting it to magically be greener. You already have a job that can be your dream job; you just need to do it differently. You already have the skills you need to work smarter, not harder. You just need to use them differently.

Do whatever you need to do to remind yourself that you have the power to change how you're working. Other people can help you, but you certainly don't need to wait for anyone other than yourself to decide to work differently and transform your job into one of the most positive drivers in your life overall.

You already have everything you need to get what you want at work and in life.

Your grass *is* greener.



Jason Silver is a multi-time founder of companies and a multi-time founder of kids. He is driven by helping modern employees and teams discover better ways to work, with surfing a close second. An early employee at Airbnb, he also helped build an AI company from the ground up before the field gained mainstream attention. Today, he advises a startup portfolio valued in the billions on how to build enduring companies where people genuinely enjoy working. A sought-after speaker, instructor, and advisor, Silver focuses on making work a meaningful driver of positivity. His children regularly remind him how much he still has to learn.

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