

Meandering toward nowhere special

Five behaviors that often come clumped together, each conspiring to lead you toward disappointment:

Big dreams: The goal isn't consistent impact or meaningful work, it's a huge hit, the star turn and the ability to change the world. It wouldn't be enough to have 1000 true fans, the big dreamer wants a stadiumful in every town.

Poor work habits: Flitting from project to project, waiting for inspiration to arrive, stalling, not taking lessons, repeating the same early steps over and over...

Shortcut seeking: Why bother with the long route when you can find a shorter, faster path? Get-rich-quick schemes, insider access and the quest to get it right now.

Lottery thinking: This is a variation of shortcut thinking, but it involves getting picked. One person, one organization, one Wizard of Oz who will magically make it all happen.

Lack of self-awareness: The self-delusion that your stuff is in fact world-class, and that the critics, all of them that you've managed to interrupt, are wrong.

Just for kicks, imagine someone who embraces the opposite of all five of these behaviors. Someone focused on doing the work, her work, relentlessly getting better, shipping it, racking up small wins and earning one fan at a time. And doing it all with a trained eye on what it means to do it better.

Hard to imagine a better shot at making a difference.