Sigmund Freud once said that in order to be happy in life, a human being needed to acquire two things: the capacity to work, and the capacity to love. This is a book that asks the question: what if those two things could come together for you, each and every day of your life? Hugh Macleod makes a living creating what some people would call cartoons. He started off drawing on the back of business cards at bars in Manhattan while drowning in the misery of his on again, off again career in advertising. He was struck in the proverbial rat race, and he certainly wasn’t winning. Then, one day, he started a blog to share his drawings and musings with the entire world. It didn’t happen overnight, but eventually his Evil Plan worked!
is the marriage of love and work considered an Evil Plan? Because you simply aren’t supposed to be happy doing the work you are doing. You are supposed to struggle and hate your job, just like the rest of us. You are supposed to commute for an hour a day, both ways, just like the rest of us. You are supposed to do this so you can climb the corporate and social ladder, just like the rest of us. Anybody who bucks the system that we’ve all fallen prey to, well, they must be evil, or stupid, or... both.
You can wake up every morning feeling inspired and energized by the work you are doing to do. This is the story of how Hugh did it, and how you can do it too.
There’s only one catch to creating your Evil Plan – you have to be great at what you do. Ask anybody who has had success in merging art and commerce for their story, and you’ll rarely hear the story of an overnight success. You are much more likely to hear a story of people who “made art everyday”.

Art doesn’t have to mean painting landscapes or composing symphonies. Hugh defines art as whatever is meaningful and powerful to you. That could be crafting a blog post, interviewing famous people, or a million other things. The important thing is that you take what you love, and you do it every single day. When you study the lives of the most famous artists, musicians or inventors in history, you will find that they were also the most prolific. It’s easy to assume that they were so prolific because they had a gift that you or I will never possess, but the reality is that they were prolific because they chose to be.

If you are the kind of person who needs proof, studies have shown that people who practice for smaller periods of time daily end up becoming significantly better musicians than those who practice for longer periods less frequently. Of course, this sounds like a lot of work. So you better truly love what you choose as your art. This takes an understanding of who you really are. Hugh truly loves making art on the back of business cards. John Lennon truly loved writing music. Einstein truly loved uncovering the mysteries of the universe. What’s the point? You can’t fake your art.
What's your art thing?
understand what your “art” can be.

The best way to truly

is to take a look at what you do with your

spare time

That’s where the clues and hints are hidden...
Right **NOW**, in this moment, you could decide to become an artist. In the past, becoming an “artist” was a title bestowed upon you by the outside world. If you wanted to become a successful musician, you would have to sign a record deal with a large label, which was a long-shot at best. In order to be a respected artist, you needed to have a reputable gallery agree to host an exhibition. If you wanted to be an author, you’d have to be discovered by a publisher. The only reason you needed this 5 years ago was that these labels, galleries and publishers held the key to distribution. It was the only way to reach an audience. Those days are over.
If you make your art “social”, you can skip the long line of people waiting to be discovered and reach those people directly. As Hugh says, it’s not so much what the product does that matters, it’s how we socialize around it. Hugh does this with his daily cartoons. Every single day, he releases a new cartoon into the world. Every single day, people share these cartoons with their friends, print them out and tack them up in their cubicles, and talk about them with their co-workers. The essence of “social” is that you do things worth talking about.
Hugh would tell you that in order to take advantage of “social,” you need to create “social objects.” Creating social objects is more of an art and less of a science. Why? Because even though you are creating art every single day, there’s no way to predict which pieces of art will turn into social objects. That is determined by the market.

The only way to succeed then is to continue to create your art and learn from your experience. In fact, there is a term for this: R.A.T.
1 of the biggest barriers to your success in the Western world is oversupply. You only need to go to the local grocery superstore to realize this. There are hundreds of brands and choices in almost every single category. There comes a point where we simply can’t consume any more. The implication of this is that you need to stop making the same things as other people. The world doesn’t need another poorly executed copy of something else. So if we don’t have any more room in our lives for more “stuff”...

WHAT DO WE HAVE ROOM FOR?
You can’t drink anymore bottled water than you already do. Or buy more wine. Or tea. You can’t wear more than one pair of shoes at the same time. So, what grows? ... I’ll tell you what: Belief, Belonging, Mattering, Making a difference, Tribes. We have an unlimited need for this.
Most business people would tell you that you should create as much as possible – or at least as much as the market can bear. But what if you took a different approach and used what Hugh calls the

The Tao of Undersupply

What if your marketplace demanded 100 units, but you intentionally only produced 90?
And Now For The Bad News

1

Of course, nothing in life is sunshine and rainbows. You have to take the good with the bad, because that’s the way the cookie crumbles and that’s all she wrote, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, you can’t “have it all”. There is no way that you are ever going to be all things to all people. Becoming a world-class artist (remember, art is whatever is meaningful to you) is really, really hard. That’s why we go crazy when we find somebody who is able to be world-class in more than one thing – like when Bo Jackson played football and baseball. You have a better shot at winning the ultra-mega jackpot in the lottery than becoming world-class in more than one thing. So, find the one thing you love more than anything, and get to work.

2

The second thing is a good news, bad news scenario. If your Evil Plan is good enough, people are going to hate you. Unless you are a masochist, that is the bad news. There will be people who will despise you because you aren’t suffering through life like them. A good sign that your Evil Plan isn’t working yet is if you don’t have anybody telling you how much they despise you. When it starts happening, bring out the bubbly and throw a big part. You’ve made it. On the flip side, there’s good news. If your Evil Plan is good enough, people are going to love you.

3

The third thing is that once you are living your Evil Plan, the pressure to “not be ****” doesn’t go way. In fact, it only gets worse. You will always face the pressure to live up to your best and shining moments. However, all of this will be ok, and you’ll go to bed and sleep soundly because you’ll be living a life that you love.
Fostering Your Customer Base

Remember the people who love you? Well, when you are living your Evil Plan, these are your customers. Your Evil Plan doesn’t make you immune to dealing with customers. But if you treat them right, they will be the best marketing team you could ever hire.
There are relatively few examples of companies who have fostered a customer base that essentially act as a marketing department. Apple, despite the fact that they still do mass marketing activities by the boat load, have customer base that guarantees they will be successful for years to come. The Grateful Dead lived off a passionate and loyal following for years. An argument can also be made for Starbucks falling into this category. Here are a couple of things we can all learn from that will allow us to do it for ourselves on a much smaller scale.
First, these companies help their customers find meaning in what they do. We can think of this in terms of capital. First, in the caveman days and for tens of thousands of years, the only capital we had was human capital. Then, at some point before the industrial revolution the most powerful form of capital was physical capital. Then things started to speed up. We had financial capital as we created stock markets around the world. Then we had intellectual capital as everybody started to say that their most important assets were their people. Then came emotional capital, when everybody tried to compete on how much people “loved” their products. We are now entering a period where all of those things can be considered table stakes. The only thing left is sitting at the top of Maslow’s pyramid: meaning. When you give meaning to people, you are giving them expressive capital. When they start making statements about what kind of coffee they drink, or computer they buy, then you’ve created...

**expressive capital**
Secondly, you need to learn to live in the market instead of in a spreadsheet. Starbucks founder Howard Schultz is a great example of somebody who understands this well. When a worldwide coffee shortage hit in the 1980's, Starbucks had 2 choices. Decrease the quality of its coffee, or increase prices. Your accountant would have told you to decrease the quality, because they had studies to show that only 10% of their customers would be able to taste the difference. But raise your prices, and everybody notices immediately. Schultz chose the second option, and left a note in every store explaining the situation. When coffee prices returned back to normal, so did the Starbucks prices.

Only a business with a loyal fanbase can do things like that and not have a revolt on their hands.
Evil Plans are not for everybody. If you want to live a miserable existence, grinding out a living so you can buy lots of things that won’t make you an ounce happier than you already are, be our guest. But if you think that things could be different, and that you could have a life full of meaning and happiness, this is the book for you: