

The **Zone of Genius**, a term coined by Gay Hendricks, refers to the intersection of your unique talents, passions, and strengths. It is the state where you feel most energized and natural, allowing your innate abilities to shine. When operating in your Zone of Genius, you engage in work that not only utilizes your natural skills but also brings you joy and fulfillment. This concept is part of a broader framework that includes other zones, such as the Zone of Incompetence and Zone of Excellence, which help individuals identify where they can achieve mastery in their lives.  Maven +4

Matching people to what needs to get done is an age-old problem in company building. And on a micro level, aligning yourself with the right role is also challenging. What should you delegate? Where should you focus your efforts?

Finding the right role must be an optimization between what you want, what you are good at, and what the organization needs now in order to achieve its goals, which in turn puts it on a path to achieve its mission.

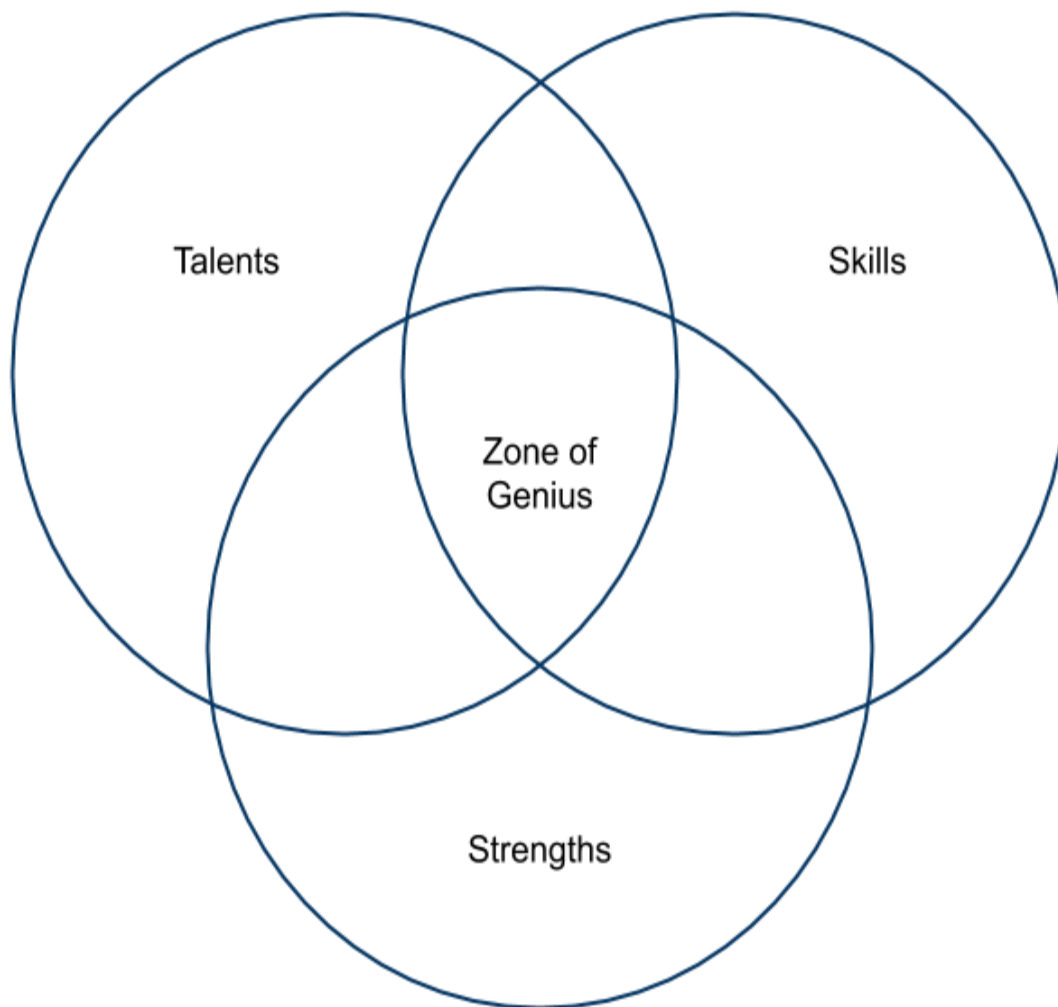
We've found the Zone of Genius framework from [The Big Leap](#) by Gay Hendricks to be a useful way of ensuring there's harmony between jobs and people. It's pretty straightforward. Here's how it works.

The zones#

There are four zones: Zone of Incompetence, Zone of Competence, Zone of Excellence, and Zone of Genius.

People's performance consists of a mixture of skills, strengths, and talents. Here's how we define them:

- A **strength** is anything that gives you energy.
- A **talent** is an innate ability that can't be taught (for example, being incredible with numbers).
- A **skill** is a competency that can be taught (for example, knowing Excel back to front).



Zone of Incompetence#

The most obvious misalignment between people and tasks is where there is a lack of talent or skills. In this case, the person should either be retrained, redistributed in the organization, or asked to find a better match outside the company.

Zone of Competence#

These are tasks that people are good at, but that other people can do better. Work that falls under this category should be delegated or redistributed to people more suited for it.

Zone of Excellence#

It's less clear when someone is talented and skilled in a particular area, but the work doesn't give them energy. They may be successful in the short term, but over time, they will burn out. We call this the Zone of Excellence. It's important to recognize when people are in this (or even better, if *they* can recognize it), so you can do something about it.

Zone of Genius#

When all talents, skills, and strengths are aligned, we are in our Zone of Genius.

The things in your Zone of Genius are the things that you are uniquely good at in the world, and that you love to do (so much so, that time and space likely disappear when you do them). This is where you can add the most value to the world and yourself. This is where you should be driving toward spending most, if not all, of your time. The same goes for your team; they're at their best when they're operating out of this place.

"Some people worry that if each of us operates solely in our Zone of Genius, no one will be available to do the un-fun stuff. This is a false fear. There are many personality types. For every activity that feels unfun to you, there is someone out there who not only excels at it but loves it. The key in any organization is for people to be transparent about what their Zone of Genius is, and then map all activities to the right people through Areas of Responsibility (AORs)."

- Matt Mochary, *The Great CEO Within*

Feedback and the Zone of Genius#

Every person is unique. You can't turn weaknesses into strengths, or create talent where there is none. These things are innate. All you can teach is skills and self-awareness, so direct your feedback there. Focus on doubling down on someone's existing Zone of Genius, or shift them into a role better aligned with their Zone of Genius.

How To Figure Out What Your Zone of Genius Is

What is a Genius Zone?

A zone of genius is something described by psychologist Gay Hendricks in his book [The Big Leap](#).

Here, Hendricks talks about 4 “zones of function”:

1. *The incompetence zone*: This is where you aren't good at your work because you lack the right skills and understanding.
2. *The competence zone*: This is where you're efficient at your work, but you don't stand out or offer anything unique compared to other people performing the same tasks. You simply get the job done to a satisfactory level.
3. *The excellence zone*: This is where you are super skilled in your work and have likely cultivated, established, and practised this over time. In comparison to others, you are exceptionally good.
4. *The genius zone*: This is where your greatest passion meets your natural talents, and you can capitalise on your innate abilities.

Your zone of genius is the only state in which you can get into ‘flow’, a concept described by psychologist [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#). In this flow, you're drawing on talents that come to you effortlessly, so when you work, you are completely immersed and don't notice time passing.

Your genius zone is unique to you and your personality traits. Think of it as uniting what you're most confident in with your calling or life's purpose. It might even be something you don't love to begin with. The key to your genius zone is to take your natural talent and channel it into your passion so that you genuinely enjoy your work.

How to Find Your Genius Zone

The trick to figuring out your genius zone is to understand your talents and passions. A lot of this comes down to thinking about how you approach what you do, rather than the work itself. As you already have lots of skills, it can take time and be difficult to distinguish what comes naturally.

There are several questions you can ask to narrow down the possibilities:

- What work would you do even without any incentives (pay or praise)?

- What about this work makes you love it?
- What work doesn't feel like work when you do it?
- What generates the highest ratio of abundance and satisfaction to the amount of time spent?
- What is your unique ability?
- What work produces exciting and energizing ideas without effort?

Next, try jotting down some of your interest areas, as you could find your genius zone by combining several different things. It can come from a mix of your traits and experiences (e.g., the languages you speak, your hometown, your hobbies) as well as your skills (e.g., your degree/education, your work experience).

You also want to do some hardcore reflecting to figure out your genius zone. By now, you might have a strong suspicion of what your genius zone is, but some introspection can help you be certain.

- Think of some recent times where you felt like you were in "flow," working with such focus that you lost track of everything around you
- Try writing down what you were thinking of during these times in as much detail as you can, pinpointing how you felt and why
- If you can't vividly recall these thoughts, the next few times you find yourself in this zone, take a small amount of time to write about it shortly afterwards, and then look for patterns in your thought process

Finally, to figure out your purpose, reflect on the personal experiences and challenges that have shaped you into who you are today. Write down the major transitions and struggles in your life, note what was difficult and what you learned from them.

Finding your genius zone is time well spent. Take the time to ensure your genius zone is right, you don't want to settle for what you think it probably is. It's something that should resonate within you, something you feel instinctually in your gut. This might scare you because it's easier to ignore your purpose rather than take the risk of following your intuition. It doesn't help when society teaches us that work and the things we love should be kept separate. While it's true that work involves doing things we don't enjoy sometimes and once you find your genius zone, you can't be in it 100% of the time, it doesn't mean that your work and passions can't cross over.

The Pros of Working in Your Genius Zone

Once you've identified your genius zone, find the time to practice and work on it consistently so that you can benefit from its impact.

Track your performance to ensure you are dedicating time to building the habit of cultivating your genius. Keep note of how much time you spend working in this zone, how much happiness you feel, and your level of confidence. Once you get into this routine, look for ways to integrate your genius zone into your working process.

Reprioritize what you work on to redistribute more energy to your genius zone, which you can achieve by delegating tasks that fall into the other 3 'zones of function' to people in your team who excel in those areas. By doing this, you are not only allocating more time for yourself to improve your genius, but you can also find ways to increase this impact on others by encouraging your team to take on more leadership and management roles.

By working in your zone of genius, you want to create a ripple effect throughout your business that brings positive changes. With you enjoying your work, you are more fulfilled, with more time for big picture thinking. This should boost the efficiency of your team as you encourage them to do the same, finding their genius zone so they are happy and making a difference in your business. You want work to be fun, exhilarating, and rewarding, not just for you, but for all of your workers. Implement how you operate in your genius zone into the structure of your business to improve its overall health. Work should feel like more of an extension of yourself, not just what pays the bills or something that you wake up every day dreading. By performing at this level consistently, you will inspire and elevate your team, who will pick up on your energy and ideally aspire to find their own genius zone.

Creating a culture of genius zones is not always easy; there are times when you will be uncomfortable and have your boundaries pushed in order to help you grow. But, if done correctly, your business should become more resilient, while clients will connect with your level of authenticity that stands out in the market against competitors.

Your Zone of Genius & Why You Must Live It

ROSS EDWARDS BSC DIPBSOM MAY 10, 2024

You're about to learn what the Zone of Genius is and how to move into it. We'll also talk more about why you must live your Zone of Genius.

Know that this is a potentially life-changing move. It can dramatically impact your work, creativity, and finances and improve your entire life.

*Operating in the Zone of Genius will fundamentally alter the way you work. You **will** love what you do.*

Let's start by talking about what the Zone of Genius is.

What is the Zone of Genius?

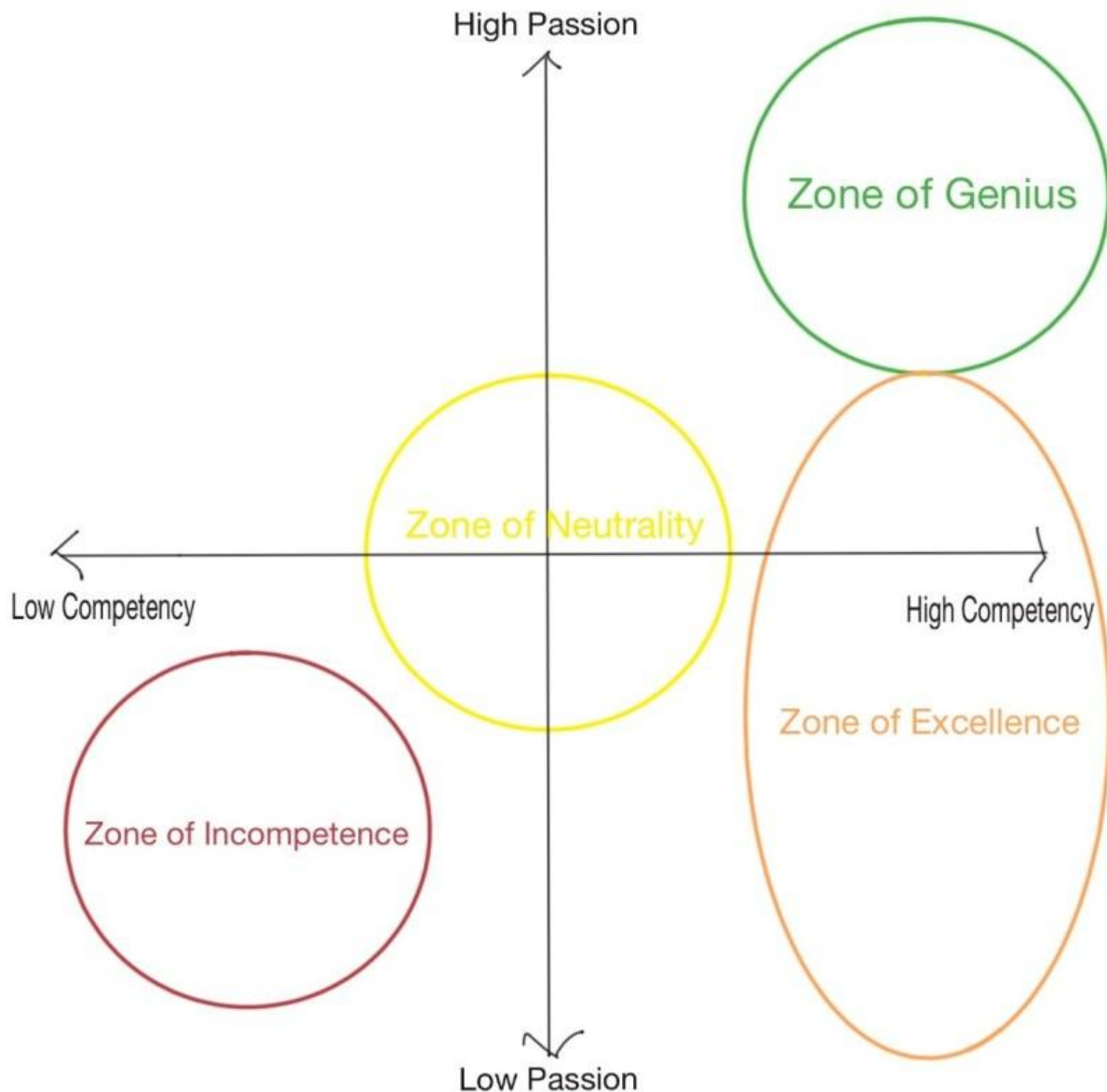
Gay Hendricks says it is "living up to our full potential." That said, there are two ways to look at the Zone of Genius, and you'll see both perspectives out there.

One way is to view it as the fields, sports or activities where we have **high competence and high passion**. For example, if you run a business that fulfills you and lets you use your greatest strengths, you're working in your Zone of Genius.

The other is to view it as the activities or tasks **within our occupation** where we have high competence and high passion. This is common if you run a business and carry out a variety of tasks: some might be in your Zone of Genius, while others are run-of-the-mill, obligatory business stuff.

I prefer the first definition because I think it's crucial that your entire career is built around your Zone of Genius. But if that's not possible right now, doing more Zone of Genius activities in your regular career is still a positive move.

In any case, your Zone of Genius means **high competence** *and* high passion.



<https://sahilbloom.substack.com/p/your-zone-of-genius>

It's a highly personal set of activities. Often, the Zone of Genius is found at the intersection of several high-passion, high-competence areas, meaning that very few people will share yours. It has a one-of-a-kind, unique quality.

It's those activities you're uniquely suited for and that allow you to positively contribute to the world. When you're working in your Zone of Genius, you get a disproportionate number of positive results compared to the time spent. It doesn't feel like work: it feels effortless, and your accomplishments blow people away.

These activities energise you and enable you to regularly enter flow states, where your attention is absorbed, time seems to disappear, and you feel carried by the joy of your work. You're not working in your Zone of Genius as a means to an end. You're not in it for the money, or the prestige, or the recognition. You're doing it because it's how you express yourself and feel fulfilled.

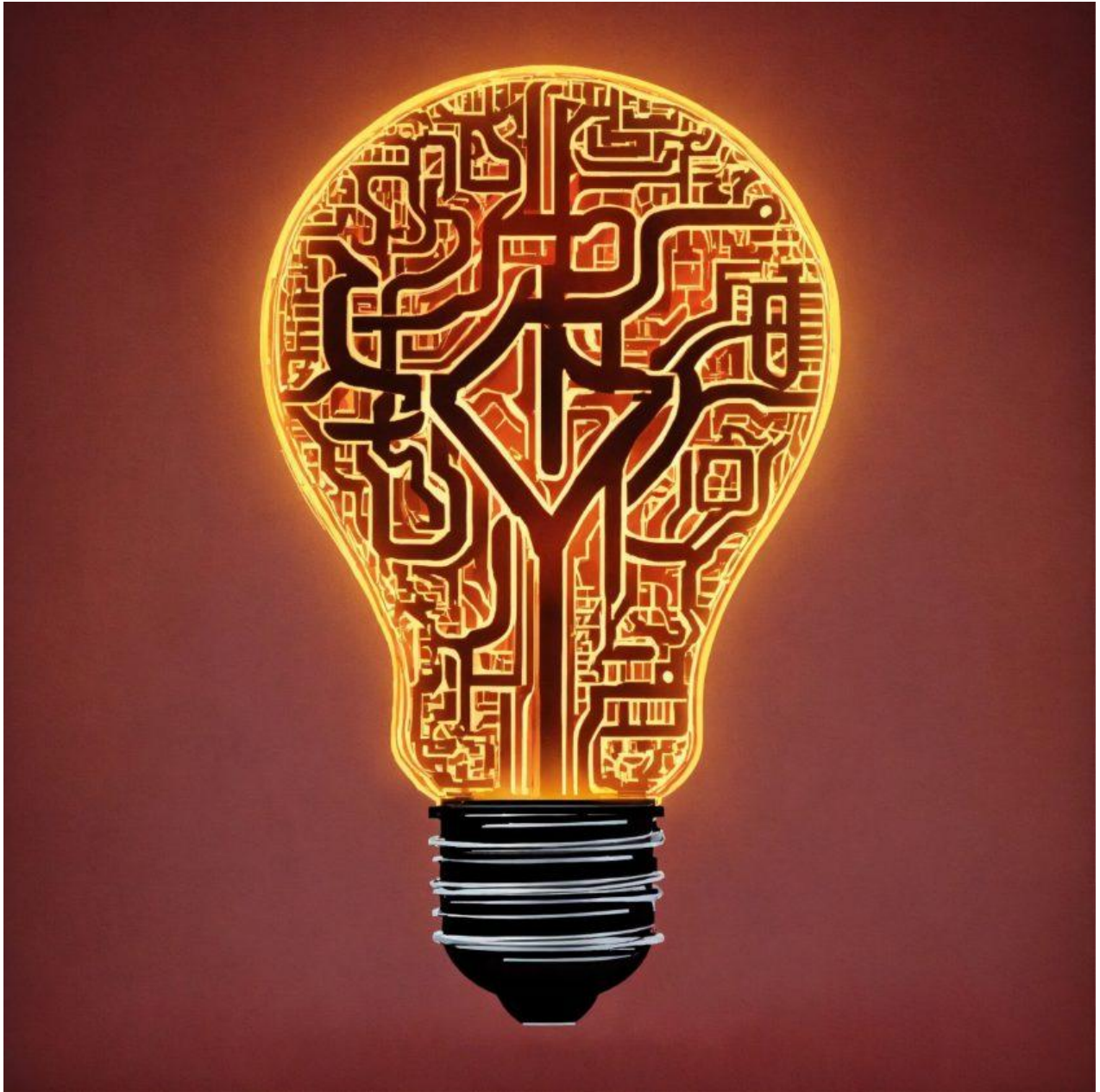
Why You Must Live It

The idea of living in the Zone of Genius and making money from it seems alien to most people, and this is a real shame. They're missing out on some of the sweetest fruits life offers. For one thing, working in the Zone of Genius is deeply fulfilling. You're not doing this work just to pay the mortgage, but to express yourself, be creative, and make a difference in the world. Since you're motivated intrinsically and approaching the work with energy and enthusiasm, you're much more likely to reach peak performance and produce remarkable work.

If you find [your life lacks purpose](#), it's probably because you're not living out your Zone of Genius. This is why you feel hollow and empty at work. It also gives you a huge competitive advantage over others. Most people are vanilla, then a penny, afraid to develop their uniqueness to the full. Working in your Zone of Genius means you let your uniqueness and personal passions fully flower. You become a rare commodity, one that others can't copy. This gives you a huge advantage in your career and business.

And by fully living in this zone, you deeply understand yourself and live according to who you really are. You know who you are, what you enjoy, and what fascinates you, and you're able to bring all this into the world. I've always had the sense that my life is singular and finite,

and as such, I must make the most of it. I want to live my Zone of Genius, know why I'm waking up every day, feeling I'm exploiting my greatest strengths and making an impact in the world. Without it, I don't feel alive.



This sounds nice, but how do we actually live in our Zone of Genius?

How to Live Your Zone of Genius

I've written an entire article called [Life Calling: Find It and Live It](#), which is a big-picture guide for how to find your passion and make a living from it. Follow this guide over the months and years, and you're likely to find and live in your Zone of Genius.

In my case, I could have started working straight out of university in a high-earning career. But I had an enormous life crisis when I realized that my field wasn't authentic to me, and that no amount of money would fulfill me if I had to work in it. At that point, I had to jump out of my [Zone of Excellence](#) (high competence, low-mid passion) to pursue high-competence, high-passion work. I spent years finding new passions and moving into my Zone of Genius. I sacrificed a lot and endured a lot of struggles to get to where I am now.

Sometimes living in this zone requires changing careers, picking up new skills, going back to school, or starting a business. It takes sacrifice and bravery.

Even finding it is challenging. We struggle to see ourselves objectively; therefore, we can't pinpoint our unique traits and approach. We're so conditioned by our society and family's view of the ideal career that we're unable to develop and express our authentic desires. What's more, we seek social validation by saying and doing the right things, instead of expressing ourselves, and this distorts many of our decisions.

Once you find it, you must commit and be tenacious. You might need empathetic support to help you find and operate in your Zone of Genius. You must cultivate great self-knowledge and do away with false modesty. If you don't feel you can make a giant shift at this point, at least begin to cut out non-ZoG tasks and projects. Perhaps you can delegate them, or switch roles, or change companies.

If you already work mostly in this Zone, you can still aim to spend more time there by delegating your grunt work to others. That way, you get to give the best of yourself to your business or employer.