

"Buy this book for anyone you would like to see make better decisions."

—FRANCESCA GINO, Author and Professor at Harvard Business School

ALWAYS

EAT

LEFT

HANDED



...AND OTHER SECRETS FOR **KILLING IT**

AT WORK AND IN REAL LIFE

ROHIT BHARGAVA

Wall Street Journal Best Selling Author of *Non-Obvious*

ALWAYS

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HANDED

PRAISE FOR ALWAYS EAT LEFT HANDED

“If humor is contagious, Rohit’s new book is positively addictive. Funny, insightful, and perfectly unexpected, *Always Eat Left Handed* is the most entertaining ‘business book’ I’ve read this year. Read this and learn why doing things wrong might be the best way to be right.”

—DAN ROAM, author of *Draw To Win*

“Filled with compelling stories and unexpected insights, this book exposes how most self-books that share career advice are cliché. Bhargava’s book is a rare treat with an illuminating point of view you probably haven’t heard before. I adored this book.”

—NANCY DUARTE, CEO of Duarte, Inc. and
best-selling author

“The opposite of just about any career advice book I’ve ever read. Make people cry. Ignore your job. Start smoking. Each suggestion felt unbelievable ... until I read it. Now I recommend this book to all my employees, interns, suppliers and anyone else I know who can use a jolt of brutal honesty on their path to being more successful.”

—BEN TUBUO, VP of Supplier
Diversity – Walt Disney Company

“Most career advice books are boring, useless, or still stuck in the 1990s. Not this one. Rohit Bhargava has written a counterintuitive, smart, and entertaining career guide that’s relevant and necessary—for today.”

—DORIE CLARK, author of *Reinventing You* and *Stand Out*,
and adjunct professor at Duke University’s Fuqua School
of Business

“After years of studying people and the decisions they make, I treat any self-help advice with a healthy skepticism. This book was different. The stories had me hooked from the start. What surprised me even more was the fact that despite the non-scientific tone of the book, every secret was firmly rooted in the principles of behavioral science. In other words ... they work. Buy this book for anyone in your life who you would like to see make better decisions.”

—FRANCESCA GINO, Author of *Sidetracked* and *Tandon*
Family Professor of Business Administration, Harvard
Business School

“Ever wonder what it actually takes to build an amazing network? This book goes beyond the hype and provides a unique and actionable guide on how to surround yourself with amazing people, connect authentically with them, and build the network you’ve always dreamed of.”

—CLARA SHIH, Founder and CEO of Hearsay Systems and
Member, Starbucks Board Of Directors

“Always Eat Left Handed is a wonderfully accessible book of small non-obvious things that anyone can put into practice. Although it is applicable to any field and age, Rohit’s advice is especially good for the world-weary young millennial, who has had it up to their eyeballs with well-meaning advice. It’s a rich collection of entirely snackable content that showcases how small changes can lead to big shifts in how one experiences life and work.”

—GABRIELLA MIRABELLI, CEO Anatomy &
Host Up Next Podcast

“Whether you are just getting started or changing careers, the beautiful lesson of this compelling book is the tiny intentional choices you make every day matter more than you think. This powerful little book will help you break down barriers, stand out and get the success you deserve every single day.”

—GLORIA BELL, Co-Founder, Women in Tech

“Where was this book when I was starting out my career? This would have reduced my learning curve by a decade. A concise, refreshing read that should be mandatory for those entering the ‘real-world’ that could use a hand, maybe even a left one.”

—SCOTT STRATTEN, President, UnMarketing Inc,
Best Selling Author of 4 books, *Left-Handed at Golf*,
Baseball, Hockey

“In this engaging and easy-to-read book, Rohit lays out the secrets anyone can use to get ahead and make a big difference in their life and work - simply by being a little different from the rest!”

—MELANIE NOTKIN, founder and bestselling author of
Savvy Auntie and *Otherhood: Modern Women Finding a
New Kind of Happiness*

“If you are tired of reading self-help books that try to teach you how to succeed by playing the same game as everyone else, this book offers a different approach. Like my in-person conversations over coffee with Rohit, this book will entertain and inspire you to be more intentional about how you find joy and success in every part of your life – and fulfillment through the journey you take to get there as well.”

—MALLIKA CHOPRA, Author of *Living With Intent*

“If you are trying to build a compelling personal brand for yourself, this book will help you along that journey. Surprising, quirky and occasionally outrageous ... this is the most fun collection of career advice I have ever read.”

—PORTER GALE, Author of *Your Network Is Your Net Worth*

“Careers of the 21st century will require speed, multitasking and creativity. If I were 20 again, I would bet my success on advice from someone who has spent his life looking at future trends and non-obvious insights. That person is Rohit and that book is *Always Eat Left Handed*.”

—PAMELA SLIM, author of *Body of Work* and *Escape from Cubicle Nation*

“Want to know the 5 simple steps that can change your life? Actually, they don’t exist. Success isn’t as easy as clickbait articles make it out to be. *Always Eat Left Handed* offers much more than that. When it comes to sharing the honest truth behind what it really takes to do great stuff at work, Rohit nails it. Are you tired of overpromising miracle cures and overhyped advice? This book is for you.”

MITCH JOEL, President of Mirum,
author of *Six Pixels of Separation* and *CTRL ALT Delete*

“This no-nonsense guide will help you make better decisions about your future and avoid the most common mistakes people have when they are first starting out in their careers.”

—DAN SCHAWBEL, New York Times bestselling author of
Promote Yourself and *Me 2.0*



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No animals were harmed in the writing, printing or distribution of this book. The trees, unfortunately, were not so lucky.

ALWAYS
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15 SURPRISING SECRETS FOR KILLING IT

AT WORK AND IN REAL LIFE

ROHIT BHARGAVA

Best Selling Author of Non-Obvious

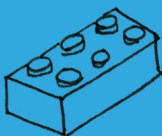


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READ THIS FIRST

IS THIS BOOK FOR YOU?



LET'S TALK ABOUT YOU. RIGHT NOW YOU ARE BUILDING YOUR career, or maybe you are still finishing school ... and you're surrounded by people giving you well-intentioned advice. Parents, professors, teachers, mentors and even random connections on social media all have an idea of how to help you get what you want, do what you love or supercharge your career.

You are already a master of figuring stuff out and you know that watching a YouTube video is a lot faster than reading a book. You don't describe yourself with words that fit in a neat little drop down box or any box at all. And you are highly skeptical of any book (or anyone) who offers "secrets" for being successful.

So, what can a book tell you that you can't already get from a video or buried in some of the unsolicited advice flying your way? Why should you read *this* book and how do you know it won't be a waste of your time?

The answer is one word: *non-obviousness*.

This book is written to share the opposite of what your parents, teachers and professors and bosses have been probably been telling you for years.

In the pages that follow you'll learn why it's good to interrupt often, the upside of making people cry, why it pays to be a crossdresser, how procrastinating more is the key to success, why you should start smoking and more unexpected advice like that.

My guess is that the ideas in this book (much like the word I use to describe them), will confuse some people and make many others angry. I am betting that you will not be among them.

In fact, if you've made it this far—you're probably exactly who this book is written for. Or maybe you're still curious about why to eat left handed.

Either way, keep reading to find out ...

INTRODUCTION



WHY EAT LEFT HANDED?



THIS IS NOT A BOOK ABOUT BEING LEFT HANDED.

It is curious, though, just how many successful people happen to share this one trait. Left-handedness may offer a distinct advantage in everything from creative thinking to a variety of sports from boxing to bowling.

More than 25% of professional baseball players either bat or pitch left handed. Three of the last five U.S. Presidents (including George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama) were all left handed. Lady Gaga, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Oprah Winfrey and Jennifer Lawrence are all lefties too.

Despite only making up about 10% of the world's population, experts suggest that left-handers benefit from their uniqueness both in terms of being forced to stand out at an early age, as well as thinking differently.

In sports, the advantage is so well known that when dominant tennis legend Rafael Nadal (who is right handed) was younger, his father trained him to play left handed to get an advantage on other players.

If you happen to be left-handed, by now you're probably feeling pretty good about yourself. If you're not, don't worry ... the truth is, I'm not either.

Wait a minute, what kind of author writes a book like this and starts it with all the reasons why being left handed is great when he is not even left-handed himself?

Though I am not left handed, I do actually *eat* left handed ... and the story of why I do that will probably explain a lot.

HOW I DISCOVERED THE MAGIC OF EATING LEFT HANDED

It all started several years ago as I was rushing to a networking event. In my busy haste that day, I realized I had skipped lunch. As I was walking to the event, I had already created a mental plan. I would head straight to the food table, load up a plate with finger foods and find a quiet spot to eat before starting to network.

Unfortunately, my plan immediately hit a wrinkle because there weren't really any quiet spots—so I joined what appeared to be a not-so-crowded standing table. I quickly realized that shaking hands to greet anyone would be a messy affair while eating so I switched to eat with my left hand.

That simple shift made shaking hands and meeting people much easier at that table, and for the rest of the evening as well. Heading home that night, I realized the conversations from that event had somehow been better than any other event I had been to in the past several months—but I wasn't sure why. It couldn't have been the fact that I was eating left handed, could it?

Unsure but curious, I decided to try eating left handed again the following week.

When you go to a lot of networking events (as I was doing those days as part of my job), or even a lot of parties at bars or clubs to meet new people, it can be intimidating to start a conversation. Though I would describe myself as an extrovert, I was never one of those people comfortable walking up to total strangers and randomly starting a conversation. Most people aren't—even if they pretend they are.

It was at that second networking event that I realized why my connections with people had been so much better.

Eating left handed helped me change my mindset. Instead of forcing myself to start conversations with a goal of collecting as many business cards as I could, I was able to step back and just be easier to talk to. I asked more questions and listened more intently. I was in less of an impatient rush. I invited new people into conversations and focused on others instead of myself.

In a room filled with people thinking about their agendas or selling their products or finding their next employer—I accidentally became the most approachable person in the room by focusing on others instead of myself.

Since that moment, always eating left handed has become my reminder to always be generous with my time and to focus on other people. It has helped me stand out for kindness and opened up more opportunities than I could have ever imagined. And it led me to write this book.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

In the short chapters to come, you will read about fifteen more “secrets” like this one. Each of them is something you can do right now. You don’t need special abilities to eat left handed. You don’t even need *to be* left handed.

The aim of this book is to offer you a collection of approachable ideas you can use right away. It is a compilation of some of the hidden, counterintuitive, and sometimes baffling lessons that I have uncovered often by accident through a career that has included fifteen years working with some of the biggest companies in the world on branding and marketing, then walking away to start three successful businesses, write four best-selling books, travel to over thirty countries as a professional speaker, and work with some of the most inspiring and successful people in the world.

WHY EAT LEFT HANDED?

All the secrets are organized into four goals—to help you think, work, communicate and connect better—and they are shared here as a collection of stories.

If there is one theme that links them, it is that there is power in the tiny intentional choices you make every day—from what you wear to which hand you choose to eat with.

I believe making those choices deliberately can indeed help you kill it both at work (and even more importantly) in real life too.

CHAPTER 1

THE POMEGRANATE PRINCIPLE



*“Whatever happens, I can’t let them
see the inside of my book.”*

THIS WASN’T WHAT I EXPECTED TO BE THINKING AS I WAS GETTING ready for my first interview to launch my new book.

It was just weeks before *Personality Not Included* would go on bookstore shelves and already my months of planning were being pushed off track.

The day before, my publisher McGraw-Hill had sent me a sample of the dust jacket in advance of my planned book tour with a short apology that the *actual* book wasn’t quite ready yet. I had a cover, no book, and my first big interview was in less than twelve hours.

I was starting to panic. Should I cancel? Try to reschedule? Do the interview without the book?

Finally, I had an idea. I started combing through my bookshelf to see if I had another book that was about the same thickness and dimensions as my soon-to-be-completed book. I found one and wrapped the jacket over top to see how it would look.

It was a perfect fit.

Almost immediately, my mind filled with all the worst-case scenarios. *What if I had to open the book during the interview? What if I had to read something from it?* I was already imagining a moment when my entire charade would be embarrassingly exposed for the online world to see.

Still, I decided to do the interview anyway.

The next day I showed up to the interview and proudly held up my book cover, fitted carefully on top of a worn copy of *Made to Stick*. I made it through the interview without my secret being exposed.

Many years (and interviews) later, I realized just how silly my concern had been. No one ever asks you to read from a business book during an interview. And no one, from a brief look, can tell that the interior of a book doesn't match the dust jacket anyway.

Of course, at the time I didn't know any of that and my problem felt monumental. Looking back, the "secret" to surviving that situation was self-confidence. The kind of self-confidence I had been sorely lacking nearly a decade earlier when I had what I not-so-fondly remember as the worst meeting of my life.

HOW TO FAIL MISERABLY AT SELLING YOUR IDEA

The year was 1998 and I had an idea that I thought was going to change the fine dining industry. At the time, very few restaurants had a website and so I had come up with an idea to use the Internet to bring these restaurants into the 21st century (literally, since it was still two years until the year 2000!).¹

My business model consisted of services (getting restaurants to pay me to build their websites) and media (creating an online directory of websites that would become the place for anyone to find a restaurant).

To start, I registered the domain name *www.dc-restaurants.com* for my directory and then started my efforts by going door to door in a part of Washington, D.C. called Georgetown to try and convince restaurant owners to pay me \$200 to build their website. Everyone asked me the same question: “Why would any restaurant need a website?” It was, after all, still 1998.

After more than a dozen rejections, I decided to go to one restaurant and offer to build their website for free just so I could pretend I had a paying client and entice other restaurant owners to give me a chance. After I built that site, I listed it on my directory along with the handful of DC area restaurants who already had websites that I had found online. Then I visited a few more restaurants. Even *that* didn’t work.

As a last-ditch effort before giving up, I had an idea. What if I could convince the dominant Internet provider at the time to list my directory and drive traffic to it? Then I could show the restaurant owners how many people were visiting my site and all the potential customers they were missing. It seemed like the perfect plan to convert those skeptical restauranteurs.

Part of what inspired that plan was the convenient fact that the headquarters of America's biggest Internet provider at the time happened to be right down the road from where I lived. After several calls, I managed to get a meeting with one of their regional directors.

A few weeks later, I walked into the lobby of the provider, which was already better known by its acronym: AOL. My big meeting started with some quick small talk, after which the director listened to my description of *www.dc-restaurants.com* patiently. I talked about the vision for the site. I talked about what I wanted to do for restaurant owners. I talked about how *sure* I was that AOL users would be very interested in finding restaurants online.

After quietly listening to me ramble on for about ten minutes, he said politely, "I understand what we can do for you. What can *you* do for us?"

Silence.

I didn't say anything. I didn't invent anything. I didn't even move. I just sat there. I didn't have an answer because

I didn't have enough confidence to recall all the work I had done before.

Looking back, I realize there were plenty of things I *could* have said.

I could have mentioned the research I had seen about how more and more consumers were looking online for restaurants but that there was no directory of restaurants in our area yet. I could have told him about the few successful directories like mine that I had found in other cities which seemed to be thriving. I could have even told him about how I had researched AOL and knew they didn't have a directory like this one already.

Unfortunately, none of those facts came to mind, because I was too nervous. I failed because I didn't have the confidence or knowledge to be able to come up with a good answer to his reasonable question in the moment when I needed it.

After what seemed like an eternity, I finally said I would think about it and get back to him. I quietly thanked him for his time and escaped the room as quickly as I could. That was officially the worst business meeting of my life.

It would be easy for me to excuse my lack of confidence as a natural result of my age and inexperience. I used to think that if I had just been older and more experienced, perhaps I could have succeeded in that meeting.

Yet it seems like everywhere we look today, there are entrepreneurs who start billion-dollar overvalued "unicorn"

companies and make the rest of us feel like underachievers, no matter how old we are.

Is it possible that some people just seem to earn their self-confidence faster than others? And if so, what do they know that everyone else doesn't?

THE POMEGRANATE PRINCIPLE

The answer comes from a fact you will quickly discover if you ever happen to search the Internet for advice on how to deseed a pomegranate. On the Internet, everyone seems to have a theory for the correct way to do this frustrating task.

The only thing all these self-declared experts agree on is the *wrong* way: slicing it in half and picking out the seeds individually. Instead, one popular video suggests cutting it in half and whacking the back of each half with a wooden spoon (highly entertaining but messy). Another illustrates how you could cut it into sixths and slowly peel it apart (precise but hard to do exactly right).

Finding divergent advice like this online is something we encounter often. The challenge is knowing which advice to follow.

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The Pomegranate Principle: In a world filled with conflicting advice, the ultimate skill is building and learning to trust your own intuition.

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Intuition can seem like an example of a big complex thing that is hard to intentionally improve. It isn't.

The truth is, intuition is built from the tiny observations that we all make every day. When you get a “gut feeling,” it is an example of your brain using a memory from your past to help explain the present. Scientists call this *pattern matching* and human brains are great at it.

That's why it pays to focus on the details—no matter how small or insignificant. What if tiny little “life hacks,” like learning how to deseed a pomegranate, were the real secret to improving your intuition?

Life hacks like using club soda to soak up a red wine stain. Or turning on a seat heater to keep takeout food warm in your car. Or rubbing a walnut on damaged wood furniture.

In *Always Eat Left Handed*, you will read about fifteen simple but useful ideas like these. To organize them, the book is divided into four parts.

The first part is called **Think Better**. It is all about encouraging you to be more observant, invest in yourself and how to be resilient after failure. The second part is **Work Better** and focuses on how to succeed in the professional workplace. You will learn about why it matters to have professional empathy and integrity, and why job descriptions and being on time are both overrated.

After that, the third part of the book is all about how to **Communicate Better** and offers a deeper look at the

backstory behind my illogical disgust for cauliflower, why you should interrupt often and the power of simplifying and telling better stories. Finally, the fourth part includes ideas for how to **Connect Better**, including the unexpected benefits of cross-dressing and why you might *want* people to steal your ideas.

Each of the secrets is shared through the lens of a personal story, with minimal buzzwords and told as briefly as I could make it. For each, you will also get real actionable advice for how to put that idea to work in your personal or professional life, and why it matters.

When you are left handed, you are forced to see the world just a bit differently than other people. Regular everyday items like scissors or can openers just don't work for you.

Being left handed means you have to get better at finding your own solutions to life's tiny problems. That is a mentality we can all embrace, no matter which hand we happen to prefer.

So let's get started learning how to do it.

