



UNCOMMON  
KNOWLEDGE  
*and*  
UNCOMMON  
SENSE

THE BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL'S COURSE

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The  Network

**UNCOMMON KNOWLEDGE***and***UNCOMMON SENSE***written for***THE AJI NETWORK WEBSITE**

“Common Knowledge” is the familiar knowledge or practical skills that are generally shared by people who cannot compete in the top 5% (\$150,000+) of the marketplace. Common Knowledge is the familiar knowledge held by most people you know. Common Knowledge prohibits performing in the top 1-5% of the marketplace except during irrational marketplace conditions. However, under no conditions does having Common Knowledge mean we can compete successfully with those who possess an uncommon capacity to think and design action.

“Uncommon Knowledge” is knowledge not shared by all. By definition, it is not familiar. In fact, it can be disturbing at first, as it requires a new way of thinking and acting to be considered. For almost twenty years we have restricted access to the knowledge we offer. As a result our students have constantly enjoyed the benefits of the Uncommon Knowledge they learn with us.

Willpower, determination, mass produced education and energy are helpful but they are no longer uncommon in the marketplace. Everyone in the top 20% knows these things already. The self-made man of Horatio Alger who is going to make their fortune alone through their own hard work and smarts has become ordinary.

Today it is the knowledge worker who possesses Uncommon Knowledge who succeeds over the 40 years of their career. This is why ambitious athletes look to play for the best coaches who invariably coach the best team. This is why those seeking to compete successfully find the best in sports doctors who use the best computers (tools) to increase their performance.

Ambitious athletes act first to appropriate all the Common Knowledge they can find. Then they act to leave it behind in search of Uncommon Knowledge that will enable them to succeed in the top 1-5%.

The history of the marketplace is one big argument for the supremacy of Uncommon Knowledge over common sense, it's just that in the past only executives and large businesses held the knowledge. Now both the knowledge and tools necessary for using it are available to individuals. Only on television or in the movies, which sell *fantasies*, is this rule of nature broken. Only in "Rocky", for example, does the regular American guy with heart beat the smart uncommonly knowledgeable "bad guy".

Depending upon your ambition, it may be in your interest to leave your Common Knowledge behind. If, for example, your ambition is to earn an income of more than \$250,000/yr and retire at 62 with at least \$5,000,000 in capital at work (\$250,000/yr income) then you must continuously outperform 99% of the marketplace for at least 20 years. Uncommon Knowledge is required to fulfill this ambition.

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There are three sources of Common Knowledge. The first source of common knowledge is "common sense". Our common sense is our culture speaking to and through us. It is that voice in our heads we call "me", or the one on the television and in the movies, that informs us of what is obviously true to everyone who *doesn't* notice television shows and the movies are fantasies. (Psssst! That means whatever they say *doesn't* work in business or *real* life.) Common sense is like a clichéd song with which everyone is familiar and comfortable. It is like clothing that looks the way it is supposed to look because it has already been worn by the trend setters who have long since moved on to other thoughts and actions. Common sense is always old. For high performance it is also always obsolete. That is why we call it *common* sense.

The following are versions of common sense we hear often. They don't work. Our students compete successfully against them regularly. People in the grip of these beliefs are absolutely certain they are thinking original thoughts. They have no idea how old and unoriginal are their thoughts. They deeply believe that they will succeed in outperforming 99% of the

marketplace with the strategies they pursue. After almost twenty years we know they don't deliver as people believe.

In this first version of *common* sense people say to themselves that they will succeed in fulfilling their ambitions on their own through hard work, being clever, a can-do attitude and learning tried and true practices (that everyone else already knows). Their common sense informs them that they can compete alone. They think reading popular business books and magazines give them special insight. Even if they believe in lifetime education, they are always either too busy or too involved in a crisis to accept an educational offer of Uncommon Knowledge. They believe they can figure out how to design an organization, a leadership offer or a more competitive practice by themselves. They believe that they are like characters they see on television, the news or the movies, who magically know what to say and do in all situations and for whom money, mortgage, family, business and retirement are not problems. -- These people delude themselves and cannot succeed. By the time they realize their failure it is too late to recover.

The next most popular version we hear is people who believe that education and knowledge are "things" one gets at school and that then these "things" they get act on their own to insure the success they then feel they deserve. This version leads people to acquire degrees or get their "ticket punched" at MBA school. They think their degree has some inherent value. They don't realize that knowledge *is* performance, not a degree or time spent in school.

Thinking that knowledge is a "thing" actually stops people from learning in school. Knowledge and power are distinctions of performance, not understanding. These people lack wonder and passion for performance and service. They have too many answers and too few powerful actions. After school their incorrect common sense about knowledge negates the possibility of acting powerfully in business. Frequently people who think knowledge is a thing can't think or design powerful action for themselves. Different from the first group, however, people with this common sense and schooling can be useful to people who are powerful.

The second source of Common Knowledge in business is a person's conversations at work, whatever they may be. Whatever we talk about with people recurrently *forms* our common sense. That is, our common sense is the recurrent conversations that result as a consequence

of our participation with people. Our common sense is not a private thing we invent on our own. It is our personal manifestation of what is commonly thought in the groups with which we talk. Our common sense is the narratives and the practices we embody.

If, for example, we talk recurrently about work with people earning \$80,000 a year, we end up sharing common sense with them. Our bodies do this automatically just as we find ourselves speaking the same language as our parents. The lesson here is to be very careful and ambitious with our choice of colleagues. Most people are not. In *The LEIP Workshop* you will meet potential colleagues, i.e. fellow *BPC* participants from other classes, *LEIP* students, staff and teachers, for forming a much more powerful uncommon sense.

The third source of Common Knowledge is education that we call “mass production” and “mass transportation”. We call some education “mass production” because the knowledge of students is mass-produced. This knowledge is inexpensive, obvious and very valuable, except when we try to compete with anyone else who also has it. We find mass production in public school systems and many universities. Most often people seeking Uncommon Knowledge pursue it after completing our studies of Common Knowledge.

We also call the same educational system “mass transportation” because all students also share the same destination. That is, with knowledge attained via “mass transportation” everyone goes on the same ride. They all get off at the same spot with the same orientation towards thinking and acting. They continue with the same trajectory into the future because they all know basically the same things. Once again, though, this is not a bad thing as far as it goes. The Common Knowledge is essential and inexpensive. And, it has its limits. What makes the difference for fulfilling our ambitions is what we learn after we have completed our studies of Common Knowledge.

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Uncommon knowledge is a capacity to act effectively and/or produce situations that are more valuable, relevant and meaningful than those people with Common Knowledge are able to produce. It is a capacity to act that, by definition, appears in the top 1-5% of the marketplace. Offers that are a manifestation of Uncommon Knowledge are *superior to* and *more rare* than

those produced by whatever other knowledge is commonly available. This is why offers of Uncommon Knowledge produce higher incomes, net worth and enterprise value.

Uncommon Knowledge is difficult to find. This is true for two reasons. First, Uncommon Knowledge is difficult to produce. People who produce it have to think differently than people with *common* sense and Common Knowledge. Since knowledge in business is always practical action in real situations and not merely theory, people who produce it must test it first. They must prove it. Their knowledge must outperform common knowledge recurrently.

Second, when Uncommon Knowledge is offered, people don't understand it. We who make the offer must invent a way to make it available either with explanations that make some sense and/or through results. This takes time. People who require Uncommon Knowledge sometimes don't realize they need it or that the offer exists. Usually people who might use it are in the grip of their common sense and working hard trying to force Common Knowledge to produce uncommon results.

Some Uncommon Knowledge is unavailable. Sometimes individuals who invent it are not willing or able to share it. This is a fact of life.

When Uncommon Knowledge is available, there are three sources. They are the "already accomplished", colleagues and teachers. These sources are fundamentally the same sources as for Common Knowledge, but with a different posture towards knowledge, competition and performance. One thing that distinguishes these sources is that they are never obvious to those with *common* sense. Sources of Uncommon Knowledge and *uncommon* sense know Common Knowledge exists, but for them it exists on the margin of their knowledge because they see a better way. These sources are, in their own way, ambitious performers who are proving the power of their interpretations through responsible action.

The most well known source of Uncommon Knowledge is the most distant and difficult group from whom we can learn. We call them the "already accomplished". They embody Uncommon Knowledge by definition. The fact that they consistently outperform those with Common Knowledge defines them to observers of knowledge and power. Their accomplishments are their identity. But, they are rarely available to new students.

The second source of Uncommon Knowledge we call “colleagues”. Colleagues are a Self-selecting group who are after some accomplishment. They are a club whose membership is selected by the membership through identity production and gossip. They are open to new members because they know they need help or they don’t flourish. They are usually non-conformists in some way. They are smart and serious. They are hungry for and study Uncommon Knowledge. They hold members to high standards of performance. At the same time that they help one another, they also compete. They are not part of a popularity contest. If you have Uncommon Knowledge to offer they welcome your membership. If you are fortunate enough to have enough Uncommon Knowledge to produce membership, recurrent conversation with them will deepen your knowledge.

The third source of Uncommon Knowledge is teachers. Teachers of Uncommon Knowledge share many of the same virtues as the already accomplished and colleagues. They are ambitious, smart, non-conformist, serious, open to help, hungry for more uncommon learning, etc. They differ in two ways. The first way they differ is that they are the most available source of Uncommon Knowledge. They are hard to find. They don’t publish advertisements in the Yellow Pages. Like a professional sports coach, they exist for the smart and ambitious performers who value their offer. The second way they differ is that one of their ambitions is the accomplishment of the students they teach. To be accepted as a student is to commit to producing uncommon results with their offer, and say so. The accomplishments of students are the identity of the teacher.

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Common Knowledge is whatever we say is available, familiar and obvious to a large group. It is common sense to the group and very compelling to them. Uncommon Knowledge is required to outperform the group whose knowledge comes from their common sense, what they learn on-the-job or from attending education that is mass-production and mass-transportation. Our past has produced our current common sense. It is obsolete for those whose ambitions lead them to compete in the top 1-5% income brackets.

A big problem for ambitious people looking to form *uncommon* sense is the depiction of business on television, by the news, and in the movies. These media are mostly for entertainment. They are *fantasies* but they are made with verisimilitude. That is, they are

made to look like it is possible for these *fantasies* to be true to life. The fantasies show people who appear to have power and knowledge without earning either. Their knowledge never comes from teachers unless it is idealized and dramatized. They have unlimited time, energy, opportunity and money. Their assets are always permanent and we never hear about the liabilities. They live in nicely furnished homes with servants and wear fashionable clothing. They drive fancy cars. Their marriages work effortlessly and their children are always well behaved. Money is never a problem, nor is their retirement.

These shows are very entertaining and equally misleading to people's common sense, even when they know it. They produce a common sense that informs people they can, should and deserve to live like a fantasy. They produce a common sense that real life looks like a television show when *nothing* could be further from the truth. In real life relationships, capacity to act, ethics, money and knowledge matter. No one has unlimited time, energy, opportunity and money. Common sense from media fantasies produces complacency and tranquility instead of a moods of wonder, passion and ambition. It ends people's futures before they begin.

When engaging with the common sense of mass-production education we frequently hear that people "can be anything they want to be" and they "can do anything they want to do". This is nonsense and counter productive, no matter how well intended. Be taller. Be smarter. Be younger or older. Take your pick. While your at it why don't you beat Michael Jordan's and Tiger Woods' records. It will only take you a lifetime.

We also hear "if it feels right, it must be right". Wrong. If it worked all those people out there in the marketplace who were doing it would have incomes and net worth to reflect it. All those people with businesses would be more successful. We wouldn't need professional schools for doctors, engineers, architects, CPAs, lawyers, etc. Instead of knowledge all they would need is to get in touch with their feelings.

People looking to sustain incomes in the 1-5% of the marketplace need an uncommon sense. They need to see through the nonsense of fantasy. They need Uncommon Knowledge for thinking and acting powerfully in the marketplace. This group needs to know how to design, make and fulfill new offers so that they are always fresh and robust. They need to know how to communicate, coordinate action, lead, innovate, act with the concerns of business and people, build their identities, fight and compete for assessments using powerful tactics and strategies,

organize a team or department, use new tools and understand money. In today's marketplace these are uncommon capacities. They are not the common sense of the self-made man most people are still working to become.

We welcome your inquiries. We look forward to working with you in the pursuit of Uncommon Knowledge for fulfilling your ambitions.

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*For further information or conversation about offers from The Aji Network please e-mail us at [request@theajinetwork.com](mailto:request@theajinetwork.com) or call us at (408) 730-2234.*