MAKE YOUR WORK MATTER

7 Thought Leaders on Why Work Isn't Working For You and How You Can Change It

workfront
BECAUSE WORK MATTERS™

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

"Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose," sang Rush in 1979, which translates to, "The more that things change, the more they stay the same."

French journalist Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr penned the line 130 years earlier, and while he meant it to be satirical, his words have come to represent a basic truth: that some elements of life remain forever constant.

Whether you're talking about cavemen drawing pictures on walls or modern software developers writing lines of code, there is a timeless truth at play.

If you understand your role, you're convinced that it matters, and you're proud of your work, you're going to be super motivated.

Motivation. It's what turns ordinary, punch-the-clock workers into overachieving workplace heroes—and it applies equally to construction workers out there digging holes as well as to knowledge workers who are pushing pixels around on a computer screen.

Yet these intrinsic motivators that we've always relied on, like pride in a job well done, are easily lost in our modern digital economy. Why? Because we no longer create tactile products that we can hold in our hands and admire— physical proof that we did good work today. So how do we know if we are creating better work or increasing the amount of work we are able to contribute in this brave, new, intangible world?

As Peter Drucker presciently wrote in 1999:

> *"The most important, and indeed the truly unique, contribution of management in the 20th century was the fifty-fold increase in the productivity of the manual worker in manufacturing. The most important contribution management needs to make in the 21st century is similarly to increase the productivity of knowledge work and knowledge workers."*

This is not easy, and it's not your fault that it's not easy. The world has changed under all of our feet. We work in digital enterprises, managing digital work, producing digital revenue—and we have to do it all with a nomadic human workforce. In a non-hierarchical way. In open-office plans. In an environment of constant and increasingly rapid change. With digital natives...

If you're feeling a bit adrift, given these realities, you are not alone:

> Every organization is struggling to adapt to the ongoing transition to an attention economy from a "time is money" mindset.
>
> Every executive needs help managing the phases of change.
>
> Every team must overcome the culture of interruptions, especially in open-office environments.
>
> Every manager is tasked with keeping workers motivated and happy in their roles and making data-driven decisions.
>
> Every individual is fighting to maintain personal productivity under a constant barrage of email, meetings, shifting priorities, data overload, unclear workflows, and workplace distractions.

As universal as these challenges are, some leaders have figured out how timeless truths and modern innovations (e.g., tools, processes, analytics) can be used together to increase the intrinsic motivation—and thus the productivity—of knowledge work and knowledge workers.

In the essays that follow, we've asked seven of these thought leaders to share their hard-won expertise with you, including such insights as:

"Manage attention, not time."
Tony Crabbe

"Don't expect systems to change behaviors."
Jada Balster

"Hide behind a plant—and keep all emails to 100 words or less."
Chris Brogan

"Stop measuring anything that doesn't directly relate to the outcomes you want."
Chris Savoie

"Work smarter, not harder, and spend no more than 40 hours a week at work."
Dr. Raj Raghunathan

Much about the way we work has changed, but one thing hasn't: at the end of the day, every carpenter wants to look at the woodwork and feel proud—to know the finished product is good and important. Fundamentally, every knowledge worker desires the same thing. What follows is a roadmap for how to make that happen.

Alex Shootman, CEO
Workfront

By Tony Crabbe
Business Psychologist, Writer and Honorary
Research Fellow at University of London

TIME IS NO LONGER MONEY

Since before the Industrial Revolution, time has been the engine of progress, but in the new knowledge economy, it may be doing more harm than good.

A t 8pm on the 22nd October, 1707, Admiral Cloudesley Shovell[1] steered HMS Association onto rocks near the Scilly Isles. In the fleet he was leading, three other ships crashed that foggy night. The Admiral had miscalculated where he was; a common issue in those days since no one knew how to measure longitude. The resulting loss of 2,000 sailors caused the government of the UK to act: they hired the greatest thinkers of the day, Sir Isaac Newton and Edmund Halley. They believed the answer would be found in science or the stars; they were wrong. The longitude problem was only solved when the unknown carpenter, John Harrison[2], invented a clock that was both accurate and sea-worthy. The answer, it turned out, was to be found in time.

The origins of working time

Before the Industrial Revolution, people didn't think in terms of working time; rather, they approached work as individual tasks.[3] We did our tasks in the natural order and at a natural pace. This worked for a largely agricultural society. However, the Industrial Revolution changed everything. Steam power required lots of people to keep the engines operating, people who needed to be coordinated. This required time: workers' time to labour in the factories and clock time to coordinate the masses to keep the wheels of industry turning. So we started selling our time; and business owners started installing clocks in their factories and on town halls.

It was natural that business owners wanted to make the best use of this time they had bought. Here lay a problem: workers didn't think that way. In fact, the historical "work pattern was one of alternate bouts of intense labour and of idleness," which was pretty frustrating for those who were paying!

As John Houghton writes, "The weavers, 'tis common with them to be drunk on Monday, have their head-ache on Tuesday, and their tools out

> *Time had become a battleground, pitching worker freedom against the needs of business. Any business owner who could get their workers to fill their time with more work would become wealthier.*
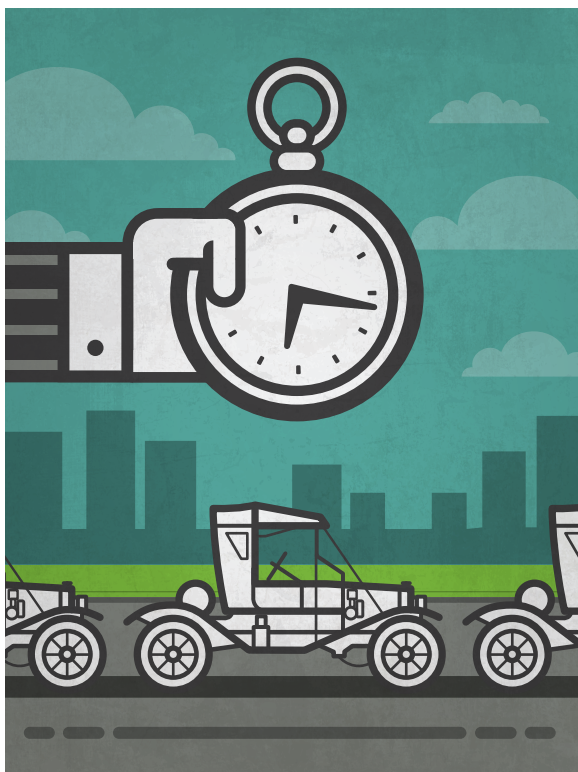
of order on Wednesday." Time had become a battleground, pitching worker freedom against the needs of business. Any business owner who could get their workers to fill their time with more work would become wealthier. In fact, so valuable had time become that many unscrupulous business owners would adjust their clocks during the day to get more hours out of their unsuspecting labourers!

This battle between owners and workers might have been an equal match until the moralists got involved. Benjamin Franklin, perhaps most famously, reframed our conception of time: no longer was time an experience; it was money. Not using your time well was wasteful and dumb. Then God got involved! Around the Industrial world, 17th century clergymen like Richard Baxter used the pulpit to preach that idleness wasn't just wasteful; it was sinful!

In the end, we all accepted time is money; as a result, we all became punctual (a word that didn't really exist before the Industrial Age), we worked more, and progress was accelerated. In fact, historian Lewis Mumford goes as far as saying, "The clock, not the steam engine, is the key machine of the modern industrial age."[4]

Henry Ford and the stopwatch

The next evolution of working time was at the start of the 20th century, with every second being counted. As industry progressed, success was based on your productivity. However, this was in a context of social pressure to reduce working

The knowledge worker and time management

Production was increasingly automated in the 1960s, so the way we think about time changed again. As manual jobs decreased, there was a rapid growth in what Peter Drucker called 'knowledge workers'.[7] For these office workers, time usage could no longer be controlled by the manager and the assembly line speed; it was in the control of the worker.

So the time management industry came into being. The gurus proclaimed that we could do it all with better organization; the filo-fax became the symbol of the upwardly-mobile; our desks got plastered in Post-It Notes; and we all got sent on time management courses! As downsizing required us to "do more with less," being organized really mattered. It helped us to cope, to remember, and to deliver.

So where are we now?

The 21st October 2015 was a special day: it was Back to the Future Day![8] The day on which Marty McFly travelled forward from 1985 to find a world of flying cars and hoverboards. I think he would have been somewhat underwhelmed by the real world of today. The thing is, our world looks boringly similar to 1985. This, however, is only true of the physical world. In the psychological realm, the Digital Era has changed everything.

As one example of this, since the Renaissance, the total amount of information in the world had doubled every 100 years. In a few years, it will be doubling every 11 hours![9] In the face of this tsunami of information, the way we need to think about working time needs to change, because time is no longer money. More than that, the very perspectives, strategies, and beliefs that helped us to succeed on this journey of industrial progress are beginning to help us fail today, because the change is so fundamental.

hours (it wasn't until 1926 that Henry Ford caved in and started the 40-hour week).[5] Successful companies were those that could produce the most in the least time.

Enter Frederick Winslow Taylor.[6] He got his stopwatch out and changed everything. He applied scientific techniques to examine how to maximize worker production by the second. He showed that productivity increased when work was divided into simpler, more repeatable tasks. As work got divided, so the profession of management was born; and the role of the manager was to drive efficiency, something that transformed worker productivity.

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Time-fuelled busy-ness and the Attention Economy

We have become so convinced that working time should be filled with activity, that we don't just work hard any more, we play the "More Game": the more we do, the more we will succeed. Time is really helpful for this. If you increase someone's time awareness, for example, by putting a big clock in front of them, they will do more[10] (just think of how much you do on the last day before your holiday!).

The problem is, the last thing we need today is 'more'. Over the last 30 years, the amount of information we are cramming into our brains has increased 5x. This increase is completely unprecedented in human history. However, over the same time period, the amount of content we all produce has increased by 200x![11] If you hold those figures together, you realise that the majority of everything we produce cannot be properly consumed! It's just white noise.

The most valuable resource today, and the thing in greatest shortage, isn't time; it's attention. After all, we're an Attention Economy! This applies to technological progress, where Carnegie Mellon have identified the greatest barrier to technological progress is no longer the processing power of memory; it's the quality (or lack of) human attention.[12]

In our work, it's attention that matters too. The consumers of your work—whether they be customers or your management—are overwhelmed. They can't consume most of what you do and offer. Success no longer comes from doing 'more', but by capturing attention—by doing less, more interestingly.

Or, to paraphrase the World Economic Forum,[13] to succeed in a future of artificial intelligence, big data, and robots, we need to solve complex problems (in other words, we need to think) and be creative. Our time-fuelled desire to do more undermines these core capabilities.

> *The majority of everything we produce cannot be properly consumed! It's just white noise. The most valuable resource today...isn't time. It's attention.*

Efficiency means not thinking

How many of us are constantly trying to maximize our efficiency by juggling lots of things at once: we keep the email and instant messenger on all the time, as we crunch through our work. We thrive on the feeling that we are some super task ninja, swatting all the incoming demands and messages in a hyper-efficient whirl!

The average office worker switches attention every three minutes.[14] In doing so, they feel effective, but unfortunately, when we switch rapidly between tasks (like email and other work) we get 40% less done.[15] As we do more tasks, we do less thinking (we're too busy!) It turns out 30% of knowledge workers claimed they did no thinking at work at all; 58% did less than 30 minutes![16] As the world gets more complex, it doesn't make sense that our knowledge workers are not thinking.

Personal organization kills creativity

Creativity—or the ability to come up with new solutions or approaches—is critical to success in the Attention Economy. We might think time management will free up time for thinking and creativity; it could have the opposite effect. Studies show that a greater focus on time reduces creativity[17] and problem solving.[18] There is also a more subtle effect: we have gotten so good at organizing ourselves, armed with our gadgets and software, that we schedule every minute, squeezing more and more into our days. When we over-schedule our lives, there is only time for doing, not for reflecting. Yet 'not doing' is really important.

When we are off task, something neuroscientists call the "default network" fires up.[19] This is the part of the brain responsible for taking all our experiences and integrating them with what we already know. It is through this somewhat random process of making neural connections that insights happen. If you're one of those people who have their best ideas in the shower; it's probably because that is the only time in your day when you are not doing something!

Time management drives more activity, but also more execution of the obvious, rather than the imagination of the possible.

Managing attention, not time

I think the answer lies today not in time management, but in how we use our attention. So what does attention management mean, in practice? Here are four ideas to directly address the time-based beliefs and habits that are doing so much damage.

1. **DO LESS BY ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTION.** Make tough choices at the start of each day by asking the right question. The standard, and wrong, question to ask is 'whether or not' you should do something.[20] Since everything in work is worthwhile, the answer will always be 'yes'. Instead, ask which of these activities is the best use of your attention that day. The essence of strategy is not what you do, but what you choose not to do.

> **"**
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2. **BE FULLY PRESENT.** When you put a phone on the table in a meeting, the other person likes you less,[21] and your conversations become less open, less interesting, and less useful. So put your phone away. Better yet, set up a phone amnesty box, so everyone else does, too!

3. **AVOID, DON'T RESIST.** Keep your attention focused for longer by avoiding distractions. Research shows it's harder to resist the temptation of email of messages than sex and chocolate![22] If you want to switch attention less, switch off these distractions when you want to think and create. Help your brain to linger longer on the problems that matter by creating (or moving to) a low-distraction environment.

4. **CREATE MORE WASTED TIME.** Jeff Weiner, CEO of LinkedIn, schedules two hours of nothing time a day[23] to create the chance to reflect and think. When you have downtime, resist the urge to automatically reach for the phone for more stimulation; let your brain wander. Unless we allow the default network an opportunity to work, we don't have a chance to integrate what we are experiencing with what we already know, to create insights and new ideas.

Time for attention

Time has served us well. For the last 300 years, our increasingly accurate sense of time has propelled our progress, allowing us to do more and achieve more. However, if we want to continue to achieve, we need to realise that time is no longer the most valuable resource; it is no longer money; attention is what matters. ■

By Raj Raghunathan, PhD.
Professor of Marketing at The University of Texas, Austin
Author, *If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Happy?*

WORK SMARTER—NOT HARDER—TO GREATER POSITIVITY AND SUCCESS

Why not working any more than 40 hours per week may be the smartest thing you could do.

Imagine that you want to identify the best violin players for an orchestra group you are assembling. You interview some exceptionally talented violinists to come up with a shortlist, and ask all of them two questions that you believe to be diagnostic: 1) How anxious do you feel about practicing on an everyday basis? and 2) How many hours do you practice a week?

Like many other managers, you too believe that those who are more anxious to practice are more likely to succeed. Why? Because you take anxiety as a sign of earnestness; so you believe that the anxious violinists are more likely to take their job more seriously. You also believe that those who work harder are more likely turn out to be the superior—versus average—violinists. So, you assemble a group of anxious violinists who practice hard and congratulate yourself for a job well done.

But guess what? You've almost certainly put together a group of worse, rather than better, violinists! A study that looked at the practice habits of elite vs. average violinists found that those who are more relaxed on an everyday basis, rather than stressed, are more likely to become better at their craft. Further, the study also revealed that beyond a certain number of hours of practice—around 50/week—more work doesn't necessarily lead to greater mastery.[24]

These results may be surprising to many, but they are actually very consistent with findings from research on the link between happiness and success, and on the role of so-called "flow states" in nurturing skills.

Why happiness leads to success

Contrary to what many of us believe, being anxious actually undermines, rather than promotes, chances of success—particularly in creative or intellectual tasks. There is an important reason for this. When we feel stressed, a part of our

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brain's capacity is occupied by the stress. The more stressed we feel, the more we are likely to be distracted by questions like, "Will I be able to complete this task on time?" and, "Will the output turn out to be as good as I would like it to be?" Thus, we aren't able to devote our brain's full capacity to the task at hand when we feel stressed. By contrast, when we feel relaxed or happy, a larger share of our brain's capacity is available for the task at hand.

Being happy versus anxious promotes success in at least two other ways. First, you are likely to be able to work longer and harder when you feel happy—should the situation demand it. For example, happier employees take fewer sick days off.[25] Second, you are likely to be a better team player when you are happy than when you are not.[26] So, you are a better co-worker when you feel positive than when you don't. Organizations appear to recognize these benefits of happiness, which is why happier employees earn higher wages than do their less happy counterparts.[27]

The link between hard work and success

The link between hard work and success is a little more intricate. To understand this link, it will be useful to first get familiar with "flow states." Perhaps the best way to understand flow states is to recognize two of their most important features. The first feature may be characterized as a "paradoxical perception of time." Specifically, during a flow experience, time may appear to slow down. For example, if you experience flow when playing tennis, you may feel that the ball is hurtling towards you in

slow-motion. As a result, you are able to cover the court more efficiently. You may also feel that you are able to see the ball much better. And yet, when the match is over and you glance at your watch, you may be surprised that it took far longer than you thought it did. Thus, time seems to both slow down (during the experience) and speed up (once the experience is over).

The second feature of flow has to do with a loss of self-consciousness. Typically, when we are involved in a task, a part of our brain is monitoring our performance. This is the part of the brain that's constantly commenting, judging, and evaluating how well or how poorly we are doing the task. In flow, this voice is silent. The reason for this has to do with a very interesting fact about when flow states happen.

Flow states are most likely when there is a match between how much ability is required of you to achieve the task at hand and how much ability you have available for it. Imagine that you are a tennis player with an ATP rating* of 4.0. You wouldn't experience flow if you were playing someone with a rating of 3.0 or lower—your "available ability" would overwhelm the "required ability" and you would thus feel bored. Likewise, you wouldn't experience flow if you were playing someone far superior, with a rating of 5.0 or higher; your opponent would overwhelm you, leading you to feel anxious. So, flow happens when there is a match between required ability and available ability.

In fact, even a perfect match between required and available abilities is not ideal. Flow is most likely when the required ability is slightly higher than available ability. For instance, back to the tennis example, flow is most likely when you, with an ATP rating of 4.0, are playing against someone with a rating of around 4.1 or 4.2.

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> *If you can string together about 10,000 or more hours of flow-like experiences in any domain, you are most likely to become a master of that domain. Flow states, in other words, are the real, and often unsung, heroes of success and mastery.*

Note that something interesting happens when you are challenged beyond your current skill levels, but not by too much. In such situations, the only way you can succeed is by stretching your current skill levels. That is, you can only succeed if you are upping your skill levels even as you are engaging them. As a result, you will need to bring everything you've got to the task at hand. That is, you can't afford to let even an iota of capabilities be engaged in something else—like judging on how well or poorly you are doing the task. This is why the "voice in your head" vanishes when you are in flow; you need even that part of your brain to be involved in the task.

Experiencing flow states, it turns out, is critical for nurturing skills. Why? Because when experiencing flow, you are not just getting familiar with a task, you are learning and growing as you are doing the task. This is why, if you can string together about 10,000 or more hours of flow-like experiences in any domain, you are most likely to become a master of that domain. Flow states, in other words, are the real, and often unsung, heroes of success and mastery.

This basic understanding of flow, and the role it plays in fostering mastery is sufficient to tackle the original issue with which we started: the link between hard work and success. Because flow is most likely when available ability is pushed

*Defined by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) as the "objective merit-based method used for determining qualification for entry and seeding in all tournaments for both (male) singles and doubles, except as modified for the ATP World Tour Finals (singles or doubles)."

to its limits, it makes sense that we are likely to progress most rapidly towards mastery when we feel sufficiently well-rested and energetic. Why? Because that's when the ability that we bring to the table—the available ability—is likely to be higher. This, in turn, means that it's important to feel mentally fresh and physically well-rested when we get to work. That's when we are most likely to experience flow and thus, most likely to further develop our skills and talents.

Celebrating the 40-hour work week

Where does all of this leave us? Well, it suggests two things. First, it suggests that the popular belief that people who feel anxious or stressed are more productive may be a misconception. This is not to say that anxiety and stress cannot motivate us to get started on a task, or keep us motivated to complete it. Rather, it suggests that, by and large—and particularly in intellectual tasks and in those that involve teamwork—those feeling relaxed and happy are more likely to succeed in the long-run.

Second, it suggests that there is something to the popular saying, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." The research on the link between work and success suggests that you would be better off if you worked smarter—not harder. And part of what constitutes smart work is to take the time needed to recharge yourself both mentally and physically on a regular basis.

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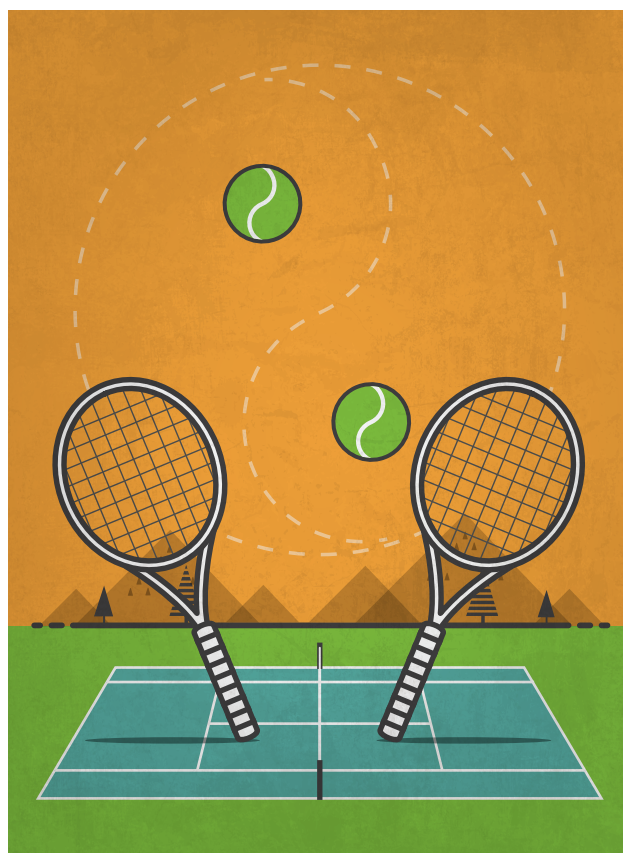
These conclusions suggest a relatively straightforward implication: the more managers instill positivity in employees, the higher the employees' productivity is likely to be. To instill positivity in employees, managers could start off meetings by encouraging everyone to share a recent positive experience. Another way to boost positivity is to allow employees to donate any unused sick-leave to help out other employees in need of extra days off.

A final idea is to encourage employees to spend no more than 40 hours/week at work. When you work 40 hours/week or less, you will have the time to refresh and rejuvenate. As such, you will feel more positive and will also be more likely to get into flow states. This is why employees in some of the most productive countries in the world, like Germany and France, work, on average, only about 35 hours/week[28]. ■

By Amanda Schneider & Suzanne Maynard
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YOUR OFFICE IS ANNIHILATING YOUR PRODUCTIVITY: 5 WAYS TO STOP IT

Could the very design of your workplace and tools you use be responsible for your lackluster productivity? Research says yes, but there is a way out.

The concept of going to work has evolved dramatically over the past 10 years. Visions of the 1960's Mad Men era come to mind, as men and women packed their briefcases, filled with paper files and bologna sandwich lunches, and went to the office from the hours of 9 to 5. Did they work the whole time? Sometimes. Did they take breaks to grab lunch? Of course.

But what they didn't have was the ability to come and go as they please, picking up an email or conference call from their smartphone while sitting in the parking lot of their doctor's office, or on the train home to their child's soccer game. What's more, the idea of working from home was preposterous.

The availability of video conferencing, secure VPN network access, and the always-connected smartphone has expanded the concept of work from somewhere you go to *something you do*. As work has evolved from a place to an action, has the physical workplace adapted to accommodate these new trends? How does the space you work in—be it your office, your home, or the coffee shop down the street—positively enhance your productivity and time management, ultimately allowing you to transform your work life?

To answer this question, we're going to dive into the five critical overhauls your workplace needs in order to make physical space conducive to productivity and time management.

① Apply activity-based design in the workforce

As office space transitions from the only place to work to an optional place to work, companies are finding ways to better utilize their physical space. More times than not, this results in a reconfiguration of the existing space, often seen as a reduction to "right size," or maximizing space utilization

> " *The availability of video conferencing, secure VPN network access, and the always-connected smartphone has expanded the concept of work from somewhere you go to something you do.*

while benefiting the bottom line. Companies are looking at the way people get work done while they are physically in the office and are designing spaces accordingly.

For example, the concept of activity-based work "is based on the premise that no employee 'owns' or has an assigned workstation. Rather, the broader workspace provides employees with a variety of predetermined activity areas that allow them to conduct specific tasks including learning, focusing, collaborating, and socializing."[44]

As technology untethers us from a single work location, this type of work becomes possible. However, activity-based work is most successful when planners recognize that the same employee may have completely different preferences based on their mood, project load, or individual task for any given day. Today's project might be conducive to one environment, while tomorrow's task can be completed more effectively in a completely different environment.

Giving employees the ability to choose how they work best based on the task they are trying to complete has proven wildly successful, as demonstrated by a recent Steelcase workplace study that found that of more than 10,500 workers in Europe, North America, and Asia, 11% cited that they had activity-based work spaces in their offices.[45] Not surprisingly, that same 11% reported the greatest satisfaction and engagement with their companies.

![workfront logo]

In short, employees that have choices when they physically are in the office are happier performers.

② Reduce distractions to increase productivity

One of the most common complaints about working in an office setting is distractions. Workplace distractions can take many forms: visual, technology (IM), and even acoustical. These complaints appear to be increasing with the prevalence of open office planning. Still, more and more companies are leaning toward the open-concept workspace, thus care needs to be taken to ensure employees can still focus.

While visual distractions are enhanced by open workspace, acoustical challenges have always impacted workplace productivity. Both can be managed by giving workers choice in where and how to work, with varying levels of activity-appropriate visual and acoustical privacy. A baseline survey conducted by the GSA WorkPlace 20•20 program—to determine worker's perceptions of acoustics in the workforce—found that 60% of surveyed individuals said they could get more done if it were quieter in their workplace.[46]

Sometimes, creating that quiet space can be as simple as installing acoustical panels to defer noise from surrounding areas. Other times, it involves creating individual work nooks, such as focus rooms, that provide employees a haven of quiet for projects that require focus. In their new "right sized" spaces, companies need to achieve "right design," too. A mix of space types—including enclosed focus rooms, huddle rooms for small meetings, etc.—or zoning the office is essential in creating a well-designed, balanced workplace that supports individual needs and collaboration.

③ Incorporate wellness attributes like natural light and the outdoors

Wellness within the workplace is becoming a rising focus for employers, which includes access to natural light and accessibility to the outdoors. Giving employees the option to either see or go outdoors has emotional and physiological benefits beyond what can be measured. In a recent Landscape Forms interview with Dr. Warber, healthcare expert and PhD researcher, she explains the important shift of our view toward outdoor space:

> *"Outdoor space has been looked at as a passageway between buildings, which can give us small doses of rejuvenation. What is new is looking at the outdoor space not as a pass-through, but as a destination. And in this instance, the same care we take to plan furniture layouts in our interior spaces should be given to outdoor space if we want more functionality." (Source: Dr. Warber Interview, November 2016)*

Increasing numbers of companies are designing designated spaces for employees to work outdoors. But what if your company isn't so generous?

Circling back to the ability to get work done anywhere, remote access and telecommuting benefits don't have to apply to working only at home; employees can obtain all the benefits of working outdoors, even at the
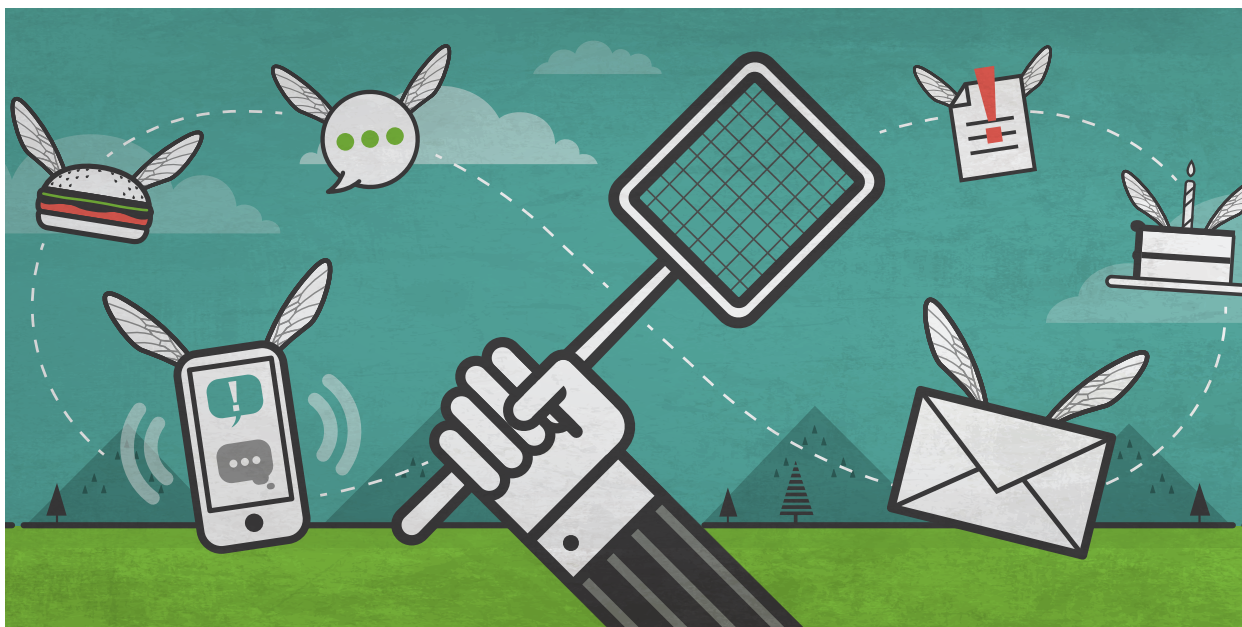
office, from the comfort of an outdoor rooftop terrace, cafe, or a picnic table near the main entrance. Simple actions that help rethink use of the outdoors, such as outdoor walking meetings or breaks outdoors—and a culture that allows them—can make a big impact.

Additionally, there's a new and increasingly implemented building standard that helps design for the full employee body. The WELL Building Standard™ uses innovative, research-based strategies to advance health, happiness, mindfulness, and productivity in our buildings and communities.[47] Backed by notable sources like Leonardo DiCaprio, the Clinton family, and Deepak Chopra and notable industry experts, this standard was designed with the help of architects and

building and medical professionals who came together to determine the best way to make healthier buildings. With more than 100 features that address workplace preferences and how people get work done, this design standard has paved the way for meaningful conversation about how people work their best.

④ View technology as an enhancement, not an inhibitor

We've touched briefly on the technology and tools that enable worker mobility and make possible this conversation of workplace flexibility. The first items that come to mind are remote access via a secured VPN, teleconferencing, and the ability to stay connected, 24/7, via smartphones. However, with all of this technology comes an underlying burden. While having the ability to work whenever and wherever you want is wonderful from a flexibility perspective, it's also important to be able to turn work off and focus on personal time.

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> *81% of employees surveyed in a 1,003-person, Adobe-run study think state-of-the-art technology is more important to where they work than other perks or amenities.*

Technology must be viewed as an enhancement to the ability to get work done, instead of a burden to do vastly more. For example, research has found that adding video conferencing to a meeting reduces the average time of the meeting from 90 minutes to 30 minutes, giving employees valuable time back to their day.[48] In this case, the technology is an additional benefit to the current workload, creating a resource to get more work done, better.

While technology is redefining the function of office spaces, employees are seeing the change as a welcome benefit. In fact, 81% of employees surveyed in a 1,003-person, Adobe-run study think state-of-the-art technology is more important to where they work than other perks or amenities.[49]

⑤ **Explore flexible, individualized paths to productivity**

As discussed, getting work done is no longer defined by where you go; work can happen anywhere, anytime. If we are looking to maximize productivity, perhaps schedules should be dictated by your personal preferences and natural tendencies.

Perhaps you're an early riser—why shouldn't you be able to harvest your most productive hours and get more work done before 9 a.m., and then be done for the day a few hours before 5 p.m.? Technology is facilitating virtual collaborative teamwork that does

> *Just as we think we have figured one thing out, more change comes. We are expected to be increasingly productive in workplaces that were never designed for the way work happens today.*

not require employees to be physically in the office all the time. However, in this world of increasing team-based work, it is vital that, while we accommodate individual preferences, we still have agreed upon availability hours, so that team productivity is not inhibited by these alternative schedules.

While there are still many skeptics to the alternative work schedule concept, the idea of making a way to do rewarding work at a time that's conducive to each individual's schedule is becoming more accepted. Many employees are trading in the traditional workplace environment—with the perks of employer-subsidized healthcare, hefty 401K benefits, and generous PTO—for the self-employed, consulting gigs that fall within the realms of the new working term, the "gig economy."[50]

The availability of websites like www.powertofly.com or www.flexjobs.com are just a few examples of opportunities for individuals to find gainful employment, both financially and personally. Websites like www.elance.com, www.upwork.com, and www.qdesk.com offer options for individuals looking to dabble in freelance work—or potentially turn it into a full-time career—and many experts predict that the gig economy will continue to rise.

Best Buy conducted a study in which it gave a select group of employees the ability to control their own schedules and encouraged management to support their schedule and workplace choices, so long as they met deadlines and completed their tasks. Managers were given tablets with pre-set alarms to remind them to check in on their employees throughout the day. At the end of the study, employees given autonomy of their schedule were as reliable as those with defined hours and work arrangements, and they were happier and less stressed.[51]

Conclusion

There is one overarching theme that transgresses across all the previously mentioned topics: Workplace culture and adaptation behaviors must be in favor of employees finding workplace solutions that work for them, otherwise these points fall on deaf ears. For example, one recent research study showed that 96% of respondents said supporting learners online was a top priority while only 36% said they had the capabilities to get it done.[54]

A culture without the proper tools is ineffective, just as the tools without a supportive culture do little good. The ideal culture is one in which leadership leads by example. In reality, we're all too often faced with a situation where leadership speaks and then does not lead. Implementing real workplace change involves finding the right training approach, often inclusive of a hands-on methodology, and then handling resistance with a leadership-first mentality.[55]

There are many factors driving change in our workplaces today. But perhaps the biggest challenge is the accelerating pace of change. Not only are people working in different places, but they are also working at unique times, with a diverse toolkit that enables work to be done anywhere and anytime. And just as we think we have figured one thing out, more change comes. We are expected to be increasingly productive in workplaces that were never designed for the way work happens today. It is plausible that by implementing thoughtful workplace designs and creating new cultures driven by forward-thinking management teams, we have the ability to help American workers live healthier, happier, and more fulfilled lives. ■

Despite all of the flexibility, physical offices will never truly go away. In fact, this statement is proved by the rising availability of coworking opportunities,[52] or the idea of working near like-minded individuals. The trend is becoming more prevalent, as it helps individuals who serve in freelance or consulting roles—and also full-time employees who work in-part or solely remotely—find meaningful workplace connections. As one hilarious article in *The New Yorker* that scripts a fake call to a 911 operator from a work-at-home employee,[53] even with a trend toward remote work, humans still have an inherent need to connect to other individuals.

By Chris Brogan
CEO of Owner Media Group
New York Times Bestselling Author, Speaker

MY LIFE OUT IN THE OPEN: HOW 'OPEN WORKSPACES' STINK AND WHAT I DID TO WIN

When the interruptions and "communication" of the open workspace kill your productivity, tap into these hacks to get your groove back.

B efore I became a business advisor and author and speaker and stuff, I was a cubicle farmer, just like lots of people. And like many of us, I worked in an "open" office environment. I'll explain it in case you're from some other planet and pretending to be a human. "Open office" is polite business language for "you'll never get anything done ever again!"

> *" Set up as many micro systems as you can to promote 'object permanence'. It's an overly big word that covers a simple idea: just because you don't see something any longer doesn't mean it no longer exists.*

My life out in the open

One of my roles was project manager. That job comes with a LOT of communication. We measure life in meetings. It also means that if I'm bad at my job, many people get stuck in way more meetings than they need. But the other side of my role was that everyone was encouraged to talk to me often. Interruptions aren't all that useful in ANY business. For me, it was part of my job to be interrupted.

So let's look at the game as I've laid it out:

- The goal of my role — projects completed properly on time and budget

- The players — internal customers (teams) and external customers (clients)

- The wins — fewer meetings, more execution, no mistakes, happy internal/external customers

- Scoring — faster meetings, more time for the teams to do their work

I succeeded in keeping my projects on track (most of the time - nobody's perfect). I also did so while maintaining sanity and building better business relationships. Want these tools for your own work? Let's go!

Tools for surviving in an open office environment

There are five ideas I'll give you for your own use. No matter what your role, these are powerful tools to be the hero of your office. There are always exceptions, but just like they say about "exceptions" in a diet: an "occasional" cheeseburger means once a month, not all the days that end in "y."

Object permanence—keeping on task

Just like Gold Five used to say to me while we were lobbing rockets down air vents on the Death Star, "Stay on target! Stay on target!" One way to do this is to set up as many micro systems as you can to promote "object permanence." It's an overly big word that covers a simple idea: just because you don't see something any longer doesn't mean it no longer exists. (We use the test of playing "hide the keys" to gauge whether babies are at a certain developmental level, for instance.)

In your work, there are a few ways you can do this and a LOT of them are physical in nature:

Use sticky notes to remind yourself of core projects. Put these in line-of-site areas to your primary work area. (Stick them on the edges of your screen, for instance.)

Block out parts of your calendar for the work you've already accepted so that you don't say yes when you don't have the time to execute (if that's even an option).

Before any meeting, any call, any interaction that you can do this, keep a quick cheat sheet of notes to guide you through your choices in any dealings. For instance, if you are asked to go to a conference, it sounds fun, but what are your deadlines like around that time? How can you get that managed?

How to deal with walk-ups

One challenge that happens often in the open workspace is that people come up to your desk or cube to talk with you because, hey, you're there. It's the only part of our communications life where you can't fake being "out of office" because, um, we see you trying to crouch down under your desk. So what to do?

Here's my method.

You: *working*

Really Thoughtful Person That Knows This Will Only Take Just Two Minutes: Hey, Sheila! (If your name's not "Sheila," this is the perfect reason to ignore them.)

RTPTKTWOTJTM: Hey, _____ (okay, now they've called you by your name).

You: Oh hi! I'm just in the middle of a flow here. How about I call you/email you in about ____ minutes? (Make that # real, not a brush off.)

RTPTKTWOTJTM: It'll really just take a sec. Did you hear --

You: I know it will, and I really want to give you all my attention when you tell me. I'll catch up in just a minute. Promise.

RTPTKTWOTJTM: But --

You: You'd want me to treat your project and time

as valuably, I know. I swear I'll come see you by ____ (whatever time it is you really mean).

This delivery ONLY works if you stick with it and if people can trust whatever time/date you give. Yes, there are always exceptions. Yes, if someone says, "Hey, where's Surya?" it's okay to answer. (Well, if you actually know where Surya is. That guy is the office CHAMPION at hiding!)

Tips to politely shorten any email conversation

This takes a bit of practice, but you can most definitely improve your email back and forths with just a few tips.

1. **SUBJECT LINES ARE GOLD.** The difference between "quick question" and "Will using plastic instead of steel change things much?" is massive.

2. **START AT THE TOP.** Put the most important point or question at the TOP of the email, right after your greeting. "I'm worried Heather might quit." "Should we cancel the party?"

3. **BREVITY RULES.** Make your emails less than a few hundred words. It's almost *never* useful to send the "full" email with tons of backstory.

4. **GIVE PEOPLE CLEAR OPTIONS.** "Should we launch Tuesday or wait for next week?" That gives people a head start on what you most want them to answer.
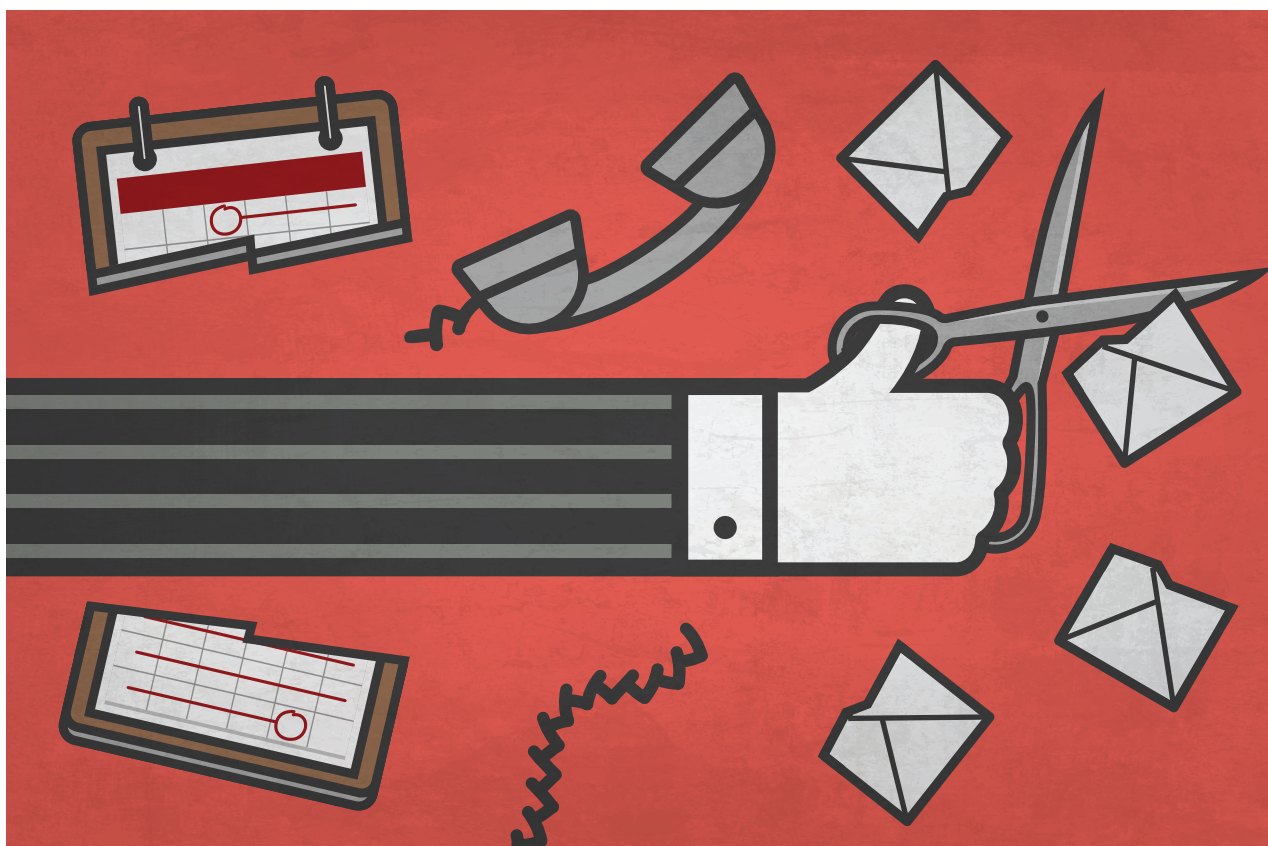
5. RECOMMEND SOMETHING. "What do you want to get for lunch?" It's the worst question in the world. Instead, "I know a great Viking place down by the highway." That way, if someone wants Viking food, you're good. But if they don't, they'll likely have a second suggestion.

And what do these email tips have to do with working in open environments? Everything. Your ability to deliver crisp, simple, brief communications gets you back to the time you need to accomplish

> " *Never have a candy dish. Unless you really want everyone stopping by at random times, a candy dish is basically a sign that you're begging to be interrupted.*

your work. And the better you manage email communications, the fewer "in-person-to-make-sure-I-understand-you" visits you have.

Make your desk your ally
A long time ago, I did a few things to make my cubicle work better for me. You might or might not be able to make use of some of these ideas:

- Reposition your chair and work area so that people can't walk up on your back. This is jarring and probably bad Feng Shui (not that I know anything about that except that you should never build a business over a river).

- Post a little sign (you can even frame it for extra points) that says: "Focusing right now. Please come back later." (For a while, people will joke about the sign. Then, eventually, they'll respect it.)

- Get a white board, if possible. Put your "most important priority" tasks up there and remind yourself to keep your focus there. Use the board for that and only that. (If you can't have a white board, consider just printing something and leaving it in a very visible-to-you area.)

- Put subtle barriers between you and casual interaction. If you've got close neighbors, maybe a plant is allowed? All the greenery does great to turn you into a bunker-hiding antisocial! (I jest, but there's such gentle psychology involved in saying, "Hey, I'm working here," but meaning it with love.)

- Never have a candy dish. Unless you really want everyone stopping by at random times, a candy dish is basically a sign that you're begging to be interrupted.

Again, I'm not saying you have to be some kind of reclusive shut-in, screaming, "Get off my lawn!" But if you want to be one of the most successful and productive people at the office, these are some ideas that might help.

Wrapping up

Having read all this, you might presume that I don't like fun. Maybe you think I'm some cold jerk who doesn't want to talk with his teammates. Au contraire. I love using ideas like the ones above so that I have more time to do what I want. That might be chatting up a storm with people at work, or it might not. But when you master your time like this, it gives you back some of your control. And this frees you up to be whatever kind of hero you want to be. Beautiful, right? ■

By Chris Savoie
Director of Product Strategy, Workfront

DATA-DRIVEN MANAGEMENT DEPENDS ON IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT DATA

In a world of data overload, it's up to managers to translate the most relevant data and drop the numbers that just don't really matter.

Knowledge workers today are overrun with data. The challenge for managers isn't so much to make sure our decisions are driven by data—that's a given. The numbers we pass around and pay attention to fundamentally inform our view of how work is going, how much bandwidth we have, what's most important to tackle next, and more. In this intangible, digital world we inhabit, data is the lens through which we see our work.

The real challenge is in ensuring our decisions are based on the right data, applied in the right ways—a far more subjective proposition.

Given that there's no universal handbook that will work for every industry or every company, how does a manager know which metrics to elevate and which to ignore? I can't tell you that. But I can give you four guideposts that will help you zero in on the measurements that will matter most in your particular circumstances.

① Think of yourself as a translation layer

Managers usually have to rely on two completely different data sets — one for managing their team effectively and another for reporting up to their bosses. And the two don't always correlate directly, especially for knowledge work as opposed to engineering projects or manufacturing.

> " To help navigate the two halves of my work world, it helps to think of myself as a translation layer. The effort I spend translating my team's work into reportable metrics helps reveal the numbers I should be paying attention to.

For me, at the director level in the software industry, that worker-level metric can be difficult to tie up to a number that the boss cares about. Why? Because the identification of what we want to do up front is all about technical work, but the evaluation afterward is all about revenue. It's like speaking two different languages.

To help navigate the two halves of my work world, it helps to think of myself as a translation layer. The effort I spend translating my team's work into reportable metrics helps reveal the numbers I should be paying attention to—and it ensures that the projects coming into my team are aligned with the strategic goals my bosses want.

Depending on your company and industry, the complexity of this conversion task varies widely. In manufacturing, it's relatively straightforward; the number of widgets created per hour directly corresponds to revenue. In the realm of knowledge work, you might feel like you're translating Spanish to Portuguese—not easy, but not overwhelming. Or you could be in the unenviable position of translating English to Chinese.

If you're in the Spanish-to-Portuguese zone, your task may be as simple as putting the right boundaries on projects to make them measurable—perhaps for a SKU or a shrink-wrapped item. On the other end of the translation spectrum, you often need to tie multiple pieces of work together. For example, right now we're working on three major projects across four different teams to achieve one measurable revenue goal. It's okay to put in several layers of translation (think Rosetta Stone—you know, the original trilingual Rosetta Stone discovered in 1799[29]) to tie the work to the revenue. It's also okay to continually try new things. Be agile in your

> *Rather than focusing your efforts on hypothetical "we could lose $20 million" scenarios, try addressing the more concrete "we did lose $1.5 million" problems first.*

measurement, not just your work processes. Try new metrics with input from your team and from management, keeping what helps and quickly discarding what doesn't.

Once you're aware of what your baseline difficulty level is in translating metrics for management, pay attention to whether it's getting harder or easier over time. The more challenging it is to convert the numbers, the more likely it is that your team's work is out of alignment with key corporate objectives. As the task gets less challenging, that may be a clue that you're getting closer to the right track.

② **Learn to Identify Solid vs. Spurious Data**
Numbers can be seductive, and the bigger they are, the greater their allure. However, not all data is created equal.

In a competitive software company with thousands of active users, there's never a shortage of user requests, potential upgrades, and competitor innovations to consider—with varying degrees of potential financial impact. The same is true for almost any industry, from high-end skincare to toy manufacturing. With so much feedback coming in from all directions, how do we wade through it all to decide which data should drive our decisions around what to tackle next?

It's not uncommon to hear numbers tossed around, warning that if we do this or don't do that, we could lose, oh, tens of millions dollars. But the number of guesses, conjectures, and variables involved in these kinds of future estimations make many of them specious at best.

Rather than focusing your efforts on hypothetical "we could lose $20 million" scenarios, try addressing the more concrete "we *did* lose $1.5 million" problems first.

Here's an example from my world. We recently identified a problem that resulted in a 3% loss of revenue in the previous year. Of the 10 biggest companies that failed to renew their contracts, half of them left simply because the client's internal champion, sponsor, or executive—the individual who lobbied for our product, knew it best, and brought colleagues on board—ended up leaving the company. When she went, so did our contract.

> *If a team is evaluated based on the number of tasks completed, it's human nature to break projects down into their smallest component tasks to make the metrics play better.*

This is what actionable intelligence looks like. It's not something that *could* happen. It *did* happen last year, and it's likely to repeat.

Once you have real data that is incontrovertible, the next decision revolves around action: should you act on the data? In this case, the answer was yes. We determined a set of features to develop, test, and roll out in order to prevent that issue from recurring year after year—keeping that relatively minor $1.5 million yearly loss from turning into $20 million over time.

When deciding which data trail to follow, don't allow yourself to be enticed by the biggest, most alarming numbers. Start instead with the data that's most reliable, verifiable, and actionable.

③ Understand that you get what you inspect

Metrics aren't just a way of measuring behavior and outcomes. They also strongly influence behavior. If you're not getting the results you want, there may be a problem in what you're measuring, how you're measuring it, or how you're communicating around those metrics.

When you're developing software, individual projects are often framed in terms of "stories." If you impart the message to your team, even subconsciously, that your view of their success depends on the number of stories they complete, guess what will happen? They'll take what used to be one story and break it down into 27 stories. No matter the industry, if a team is evaluated based on the number of tasks completed, it's human nature to break projects down into their smallest component tasks to make the metrics play better—even though no more work is being done.

Instead of rewarding this kind of busy work, make an effort to consciously and verbally define what success looks like in terms that keep the higher-level goal in mind.

For example, if we're facing a large initiative, I start by breaking it into smaller pieces and making commitments on those pieces:

- What can we get done?

- When can we get it done?

- What is the response we want from how many people?

Then we break that down into our 2-week sprints, detailing what needs to be achieved in that timeframe. This way, we have an actionable set of work that we can declare as a victory, and it can be tied all the way up to the higher goal, whether that was revenue or awareness or something else. My team isn't measured on how many stories they crank out, but on whether they meet these specific commitments.

Whether you're producing marketing materials or building bicycles, ask yourself: what is the outcome I want? Greater speed, quality, efficiency, number of tasks completed per hour? Then examine whether you're really measuring your team toward that result—or accidentally encouraging a different outcome.

④ Regularly evolve what you're monitoring

Being a data-driven manager doesn't mean that you put extremely strict measurements on every single thing all the time. Not only is this impossible, but the very attempt will drive you and your team crazy.

If you remember to tie every metric you're monitoring to a specific outcome you want, it will naturally keep you from tracking too many unnecessary numbers, because there are only so many outcomes you can reasonably expect from your team. There are only so many things a human being can care about at a given time.

Looking at metrics from an outcome-based perspective will also force you to regularly evolve what you're monitoring, which is a great thing to do, as long as you inform the team of every change and make sure you're not changing so often that your team feels disoriented.

Trial and error is an integral part of the process. You have to just try something, and then examine whether you got the outcome you wanted. If you didn't, try to zero in on the component that broke down, and change the way you're measuring it.

Especially when something goes wrong, stop and ask yourself a few questions:

- How were we measuring that thing that went wrong?

- Was the problem in the research, the mechanics, or the ideation phase?

- Did we get the concept in front of the right audience at the right time?

- If we skipped any steps, how or why did they get skipped?

Then it's as easy as telling your team: "It's okay, we weren't measuring it right before, but we're going to change that now so we get the outcome we want." If you'll be willing to take responsibility for these kinds of issues as a manager, it relieves your team of the feeling that they personally failed, when it was really nothing more than a measurement problem.

What is the right data?

As you're managing the metrics your team cares about along with the numbers you report up the chain, it's natural to experience information overload. My advice is to focus first on incontrovertible data that can be effectively translated into key strategic objectives, and stop measuring anything that doesn't directly relate to the outcomes you want. If you're not getting the expected results, pause and reevaluate what you're measuring, as well as why and how you're measuring it. When you're vigilant, willing to try new things, and focused on outcomes, the right data has a way of revealing itself. ∎

> *If you remember to tie every metric you're monitoring to a specific outcome you want, it will naturally keep you from tracking too many unnecessary numbers...There are only so many things a human being can care about at a given time.*

By Craig Knight, PhD.
Founding Director at Haddleton Knight Honorary
Research Fellow, University of Exeter

WHY CHANGE INITIATIVES IN THE WORKPLACE FAIL

If productivity is often misunderstood and badly measured (and it is) how can managers make changes that will really move the productivity needle?

P ursuing productivity is at the heart of almost every change management and design programme[30], yet its definition seems more elusive than alchemy. Although it is the most ubiquitous measure, it is impossible to measure productivity by questionnaire[31]. Just as with a car, a survey will tell you how comfortable people may be, or what they think of the air conditioning, but you need the equivalent of a stopwatch for the performance data.

Consequently, employees in telephone call centres tend to know little other than constant measurement.[32] Emergency services operators in the UK are tasked to answer the phone, deal with the call, and handle associated administration as rapidly as possible. Under this regime, an operative who answers incoming traffic immediately, tells the caller to go away, and hangs up.[33]

One change management guru once explained to me that most mobile phone providers claim to measure productivity via a satisfaction survey. "A customer would be delighted with a free phone and free data, wouldn't they?" he winked. "Wouldn't be awfully productive though, would it?"

Productivity, then, is a variable that is misunderstood, approached through methods that are ill-conceived and assessed by measurements that tend to be simultaneously pointless and misleading.[34] In other words, the keystone of change initiatives is cracked.

When change fails

Further insight into the failure of so many change initiatives comes from the most popular change management methods in the Western world. With productivity dangling just beyond businesses' reach, we bumble instead into the alternative realm of cost saving—because measuring cost saving is a piece of cake.

> *Productivity is a variable that is misunderstood, approached through methods that are ill-conceived and assessed by measurements that tend to be simultaneously pointless and misleading.*

For instance 70% of offices operate what is called lean philosophy, often bedded into a sister programme called Six Sigma.[33] It is easy to see why when you see the promises made:

- "Every lean enterprise seeks to maximize the value delivered to its customers while minimizing waste."[35]

- "(Lean will) help improve workflow by increasing office productivity and improving the bottom line." (Dunn & Fertuck, 2014)

- "The goal of Six Sigma is to eliminate defects and minimize variability. An organization...will have no more than 3.4 defects per million opportunities."[36]

If, in passing, we acknowledge the idea that, to eliminate all waste, variability and defects must leave no business at all, we move properly into the dark realities of managerial hegemony[32]. Here we find free address workstations—where nobody owns their own desk—set in open plan spaces. Processes must be standardized across the organization, work is managed in set patterns—its tools laid out in the right order—as assigned by the management.

In these zero waste environments, if something is unconnected with work, it has no place in the working environment. So lean offices do not entertain ephemera or distractions such as photographs, souvenirs, plants, or messy desks.[37] This clean desk is at the heart of the system. It

allows managers to precisely monitor the jobs being done and to affect discipline accordingly.

The logic is simple: where there is nothing to distract workers and where all the necessary tools are provided, then employees are bound to be at their most effective and therefore most productive.[38]

The system sounds convincing; it proliferates and has global advocates. But is it successful as a change initiative? The scientific research is unequivocal on this point: lean is entirely successful if your goal is to set up the worst possible space for your employees.

The truth is, research finds that lean creates work spaces that depress all key variables, including productivity.[34] No animal, not just homo sapiens, thrives in a psychologically impoverished, high-surveillance space. A rat in a lean cage, a chimpanzee in a lean enclosure, and a human in a lean office are all beasts at their lowest ebbs.

On the other hand, when people work in a space that has been psychologically enriched—where there are a few interesting pictures, some plants, different styles of lighting, and splashes of colour—they are much happier. For example, Google's installation of ski gondolas in their Zurich canteen have proved very successful. In enriched surroundings, humans engage more, feel less stressed, and work about 15% more productively than they do in a lean space.[33]

> *"*
>
> *No animal, not just homo sapiens, thrives in a psychologically impoverished, high-surveillance space. A rat in a lean cage, a chimpanzee in a lean enclosure, and a human in a lean office are all beasts at their lowest ebbs.*

But there is a far more important ingredient to building a productive workspace—and a successful change management strategy, really: unless team members are offered a say in development, it is inevitable that some initiatives will be less popular than others.[39]

Giving team members a say in change

In studies, rats are found to be far happier scampering under the floorboards, living in a nest of old socks, than living in a cages. Rats are happiest when they can realize their own identity and not have a designer's stamp on their cell. Precisely the same principle applies to humans. Allow humans to develop their own space and—compared to a lean space—wellbeing can increase by up to 40%, productivity by up to 32%.[34]

If you want a real-world example of a good business, look at something small, run by an open-minded boss. Here, people decide together where each should sit, what colour the walls should be, and the most suitable hours to work. Here, staff sees its own identity reflected in its workspace, engagement is high, positive change thrives, and productivity is maximized.

Sadly, this model is often squashed under the bottom of the business behemoth.

Typically, when a company employs more than 20 or 30 people, areas of previously shared decision-making tend to come under the aegis of one expert.[40] Somebody somehow knows more about management styles, design, and working patterns than anybody else—and these concepts are imposed on everybody else. Popular management-led initiatives become the quality targets for the rest (Zeisel, 2006).

Companies Santander, Direct Line, and Shell all draw enormous plaudits from change management practitioners yet lag considerably behind the cutting-edge science of this chapter.[41] Companies may have consulted their colleagues to a greater or lesser extent but the final solutions are all imposed with varying degrees of consideration for the workers. Managers become in loco parentis to their staff, whose voices are muffled, identities suppressed, and performances consequently degraded. While it may be more pleasant, it is just as infantilizing to give workers a slide to play with as it is to monitor their every keystroke and utterance.

The harsh truth is, companies can do a better job of implementing change that will get maximum satisfaction and productivity from team members. But how?

Can you handle the truth?

If you want your business to thrive—using methods entirely supported by science and its application—you must be ready to face the truth. Fortunately, a very few companies, notably Virgin and Gore-Tex, have begun to walk this path. If you can handle the truth, the following steps should help you implement the right change in your organization—change that empowers team members to achieve their peak satisfaction, effectiveness, and productivity.

> *If you want a real-world example of a good business, look at something small, run by an open-minded boss. People decide together where each should sit, what colour the walls should be, and the most suitable hours to work.*

- Remember the shared decision-making of small businesses—keep it alive as a company grows.

- Change managers and designers are professionals, but they are not the experts in your working environment. You are. Meanwhile, you are not the expert in your employees' working environment. They are. Treat the experts like experts and not like children. Let the experts incorporate the ideas of the professionals and never vice versa.

- Calling the workspace "agile," "flexible," or a "new way of working" does not make it any better. If you have too many people for your premises, congratulations, you are doing well. Ask the staff what they think should happen and be prepared to extend or move.

- Workspaces—and change initiatives—should reflect the identity of the employees, at least as much as they reflect the identity of the business. If all you see are the mottos, corporate logos, and reified managerial ideas, it is a bad idea.

Follow these practices and you will be trail blazing. The evidence will be overwhelmingly in your favour. Are you brave enough? ■

By Jada Balster
Director of Marketing, EMEA, Workfront

THE 8 DOS AND DON'TS OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Change can chew you up and spit you out, but these tips will greatly increase your odds of survival and success.

Change is an inevitable part of life and business, and yet we still manage to fail miserably at it 75% of the time[42]. Another survey shows that while barely over half of change efforts succeed in the first place[43], things only manage to *stay changed* a quarter of the time, which, one could argue, is the most important part of change management.

Clearly, it's easier to fail at change than it is to succeed. So what's different about the minority of cases where change efforts work—and manage to stick long term? Dan Millman, author of *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior*, offers one suggestion:

> *"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."*

It's a brilliant thought, but how exactly does one go about it? From my own experience as well as wisdom collected from colleagues and thought leaders, I'd like to share four dos and four don'ts that can make or break your ability to effect lasting change in your organization.

① Do: Build a case for change
Nobody wants change for change's sake. And given the low success rates, you're better off not attempting it at all unless there's a strong business case in favor of the change.

As you begin to cascade a message throughout your organization around an upcoming transition, it's important to make your reasoning extremely clear—and to have the data to back it up. Why are you making the change? What will it accomplish? What's likely to happen if you don't change?

You want to be taken seriously from the start, rather than being in the position of correcting

"

Nobody wants change for change's sake. And given the low success rates, you're better off not attempting it at all unless there's a strong business case in favor of the change.

false assumptions that this is just some frivolous or unnecessary decision.

② Do: Create a systematic communication plan
With all the steps involved in a significant organizational change, one piece that's often overlooked is a comprehensive and structured communication schedule. You have to share the right things with the right people at the right time, or you'll inadvertently rev up the rumor mill. One employee hears one thing, passes the news on to someone else, with slight embellishments, and before long you're in the middle of a company-wide game of "Chinese whispers" (also known as "telephone" in the U.S.).

Designing a diligent and systematic schedule for disseminating news about your change efforts will not only avoid gossip, but it will also help employees feel like they're a valued part of the process. But don't limit your strategy to employees only; make sure to include partners, customers, clients, and other critical business associates in your communication plans.

③ Do: Involve employees in the process
Regular communication is perhaps the most important part of making employees feel involved in a transition plan. When employees feel involved, they're more

invested in and supportive of the effort—and less likely to offer resistance.

Also look for other opportunities to include employees, in ways that won't create a "too many cooks in the kitchen" scenario. When Workfront changed from its old name, AtTask, in 2015, the number of people involved in selecting the new name, logo, and brand was minuscule—the CEO, the CMO, and the creative director. But the whole company was notified that change was coming, and everyone got to vote on the name of the new lion mascot. (His name is Kazi.) The launch party and reveal were carefully coordinated across our U.S. and U.K. offices and brought every employee together, top to bottom.

④ **Do: Celebrate small wins**

Taking a moment to recognize small accomplishments is a great way to build momentum for your transition. Maybe you just launched phase one of your plan, with 37 phases to go, but that doesn't mean you should just tick the box and move on to the next thing. Stop and celebrate, even if all you do is publicly acknowledge the contributions of each individual or team and order in pizza. You may have only completed 5% of the project, but that 5% was done brilliantly. It's worth celebrating.

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> *Stop and celebrate, even if all you do is publicly acknowledge the contributions of each individual or team and order in pizza. You may have only completed 5% of the project, but that 5% was done brilliantly. It's worth celebrating.*

⑤ **Don't: Start too late**

When there's time pressure on a project, it's never done as thoroughly. According to Harvard Business School Professor John Kotter:

> *"The most general lesson to be learned from the more successful cases [of change management] is that the change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time. Skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces satisfactory results."*

If there's not enough time to do a thorough job, you're better off scaling back the scope of the change or postponing the initiative until you do have the time. Otherwise it will just be a wasted effort.

⑥ Don't: Lose your change momentum

When it comes to an internal launch regarding your change, you have to time it right. You don't want to unleash this big fanfare and stoke excitement in your team, only to follow it up with weeks of radio silence. Schedule your internal announcements, and especially your official launch, at a time when the energy and enthusiasm around the project is likely to build. If you make a big deal about a forthcoming transition, and then nothing happens for six months, you'll just have to stage another launch to reignite the enthusiasm.

In a similar vein, make sure your launch party is commensurate with the size of the change. If you're affecting a massive transformation, and yet your launch effort feels underwhelming, your team may feel blindsided by the breadth of the change. On the other hand, if you make a huge deal out of something that turns out to only have a minor effect on people's daily work, they'll be left thinking, "Well, what was all that hype about then?"

⑦ Don't: Ignore internal resistance

Like change, resistance is inevitable. By following all of the dos (building a solid case to justify the change, communicating systematically, involving employees where you can) you can mitigate the amount of friction you'll face, but you'll never eliminate it entirely.

There will always be people who liked things better the way they were before, especially those who have been with the company a significant length of time. Expect it. Allow people to express their reservations appropriately. Listen to them. Give them time to process the reasons for the change.

> *Let the resistance run its course. If you rush people through their reactions or ignore them, you'll only strengthen their opposition.*

Let the resistance run its course. If you rush people through their reactions or ignore them, you'll only strengthen their opposition.

At the end of the day, however, after you've done what you can to manage the resistance, you do have to enforce a reasonable deadline by which each team member has to either get on board or get off at the next stop.

⑧ Don't: Expect systems to change behaviors

Many of the changes that organizations face these days are technology-related. A company may be swapping one SaaS solution for another, or onboarding a completely new tool that is expected to revolutionize marketing, financial processes, or productivity.

It can be tempting to believe that this shiny new tool, system, or process will be a magic bullet—capable of solving all of your problems all by itself. But there's much more work to be done. You have to address behaviors, beliefs, culture, training, and other essential elements of adoption. You need key people championing the change and leading by example in order to help others embrace and adopt the new solution.

> *Those who are leading the transition have to frequently circle back to the core reasons for initiating the change—because something's not working, because something could be done better, because in today's fast-paced world, you change or you die.*

Change is challenging, but worth it

You may have reached the end of this list and decided that you don't have the time or energy to deal with change management. But the truth is, change is happening all around us all the time, leaving us with two choices. We can either embrace change, get ahead of it, and manage it proactively. Or we can resist change, reluctantly go along with it, and manage it reactively.

Almost anything that's worth doing requires us to suffer through short-term pains before we can experience the long-term gains. Change is no different. Those who are leading the transition have to frequently circle back to the core reasons for initiating the change—because something's not working, because something could be done better, because in today's fast-paced world, you change or you die.

If it's managed correctly, change really can be one of the most positive things to happen in an organization. It's about being brave and saying, "Yes, this is going to take a lot of work, and yes, I have to approach this process carefully and deliberately. But there's going to be something amazing at the end of it." ■

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Chris Savoie currently enjoys his role as the Director of Product Strategy with Workfront as a part of a group of experienced product managers and UX designers. In past lives, he has worked as a product manager, developing software solutions for clients in the oil and gas, mineral, and chemical refining industries, and on various support teams for the human spaceflight program at NASA's Johnson Space Center.

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