YOU AND WORK

IN SEARCH OF WORK LIFE BALANCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

EDWARD CHALK

WITH A FOREWORD BY LEANNE FARADAY-BRASH

You and Work: In search of work life balance in the 21st century

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Editorial review

Although we live in an age where freedom of choice is considered to be of paramount importance, nevertheless it would seem that we are witnessing an erosion of individuality within modern society.

Some causes for this seem to be:

- Individuality occurs at the intersection of all of the unique life experiences that formed and created our feelings of being. Ignoring or discounting any of these formative experiences, threatens the light of the individual's unique perspective on the world.

  However, we live in an age of conformity, where more and more people are being compressed into the convenient homogenous mindspace that is promoted in our commercially driven milieu.

- Currently, it is common for the workplace social scene to provide the majority of the social interaction experienced by employees. In this situation, it can be difficult to maintain a healthy separation between the workplace identity and the private identity that is needed to maintain a healthy personal life.

Subsequently, it seems that there is a need to re-evaluate the modern expectation that employees will personally involve themselves with the company which they work for, and the lack of emphasis that is placed on simple privateness in today's constantly connected world.

"You & Work" opens the discussion around

- Defining who we are in our private lives.
- The effect that the workplace has on our self-perception.
- The ideal convergence of individual and organisation that optimises the benefits of both parties within the employee - employer relationship.

This is an area of research that deserves more attention, particularly in this economic and functional age.

Nicole Sufrin MPBsS

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Foreword

It is a privilege to be asked to put even a small thumbprint on someone else's work. My own writing has centred largely on the pointiest end of work life; specifically toxic and dysfunctional workplaces. However, living in a civilised democratic country as we do, we can rightly set our sights on so much more. As a West Australian anti-discrimination commissioner said many years ago, we all deserve "quiet enjoyment of our workplace". That being said, how can we have quiet enjoyment of our workplace if we ourselves are perpetually torn about the choices we make and debilitated by the unbalanced life we live?

This sensitive commentary on the value of finding meaning in one's work without allowing work to consume us is apt in a modern world where our sabre tooth tigers are the superficiality of memes, reality television and rolling news cycles, which threaten to eliminate our mindfulness of the relationships and values that are so dear and meaningful to us.

This book espouses the importance of aligning personal and career goals; not just to avoid goal conflict, which is stressful, but also to ensure we are living our authentic values and passions.

Everyone deserves the right to flourish at work but sitting back and hoping for a good boss, an interesting job and generous and empathic colleagues to make allowances for us when life gets in the way, is not enough. Equally, everyone deserves the right to have a rich, genuine and balanced personal life, but expecting that special relationship to magically happen when the vast majority of our efforts is directed towards climbing the corporate ladder is equally unrealistic.

The author espouses the sense in founding your life in your personal realm with the development of true relationships and personal growth, and then using your inner strengths as an enabler to diversify your skills, balance risk and opportunity and grow from, not just survive change.

The most successful individuals and teams don't rely on happenstance and sliding doors moments. I love the emphasis in this book on intentionality. As Rudy Giuliani famously said: "Hope is not a strategy". Whilst optimistic and upbeat, this book goes beyond reliance on hope to the mindfulness of purposeful striving.

Enjoy!

Leanne Faraday-Brash

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Author of Vulture Cultures: How to stop them ravaging your performance, people, profit and public image

Introduction

Going to work affects the way we live, the way we think and our dreams for the future. In order to understand how to balance success at work with success in our personal lives, we need to understand

- Our own ambitions and goals.
- The ambitions and goals of the company that we work for.
- How our goals and the goals of the company that we work for can interact constructively.

If we optimise the way that our ambitions and our employer's ambitions mesh together, we can achieve harmony between our careers and our personal lives.

It is not always obvious however, what we want from life, or what the company that we work for wants from us. In addition, it is sometimes necessary for us to take a step back from our busy lives to think about how our ambitions may be affecting our inner equanimity, and the people who are close to us.

The purpose of this book is to provide a springboard for thinking about these challenges and opportunities. This book does not attempt to provide a comprehensive approach to achieving a self-actuated life together with personal serenity, however. That is something that can take a lifetime to discover, and may be different for every individual.

This book is divided into three sections.

- **Section I – You**: Some thoughts on personal self-development, independent of the workplace.
- **Section II - You and Work**: Some thoughts about the ways in which we interact with the modern submersive work environment.
- **Section III – Work**: Some thoughts on optimising the emotional-functional interface in the modern informal workplace**.**

Hopefully the following chapters will provide some useful insights into achieving a full work life and a successful personal life, in whatever circumstances come our way.

Please send feedback, questions, compliments, criticism and your ideas to fleetingswallow@gmail.com**.**

Edward Chalk

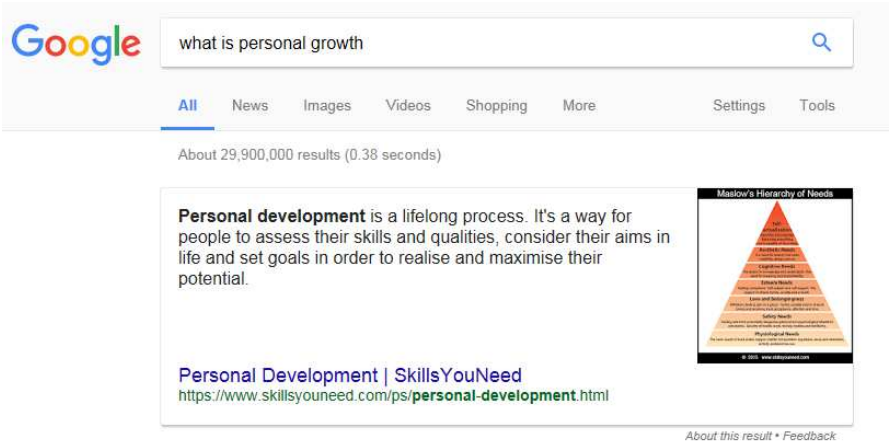
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Section I - You

Some thoughts on personal self-development, independent of the workplace.

1. Personal growth

If you google “What is personal growth”, you will see the following excerpt:



In it is unlikely however, that personal growth has anything to do with reaching our goals by maximizing our potential. From a perspective of understanding the beauty of life, this is equivalent to saying, “To make this rose more beautiful, let me find out what I can use it for.”

When we look at somebody and say, “That is a wonderful person,” what we are seeing is a person who has gone through a process of personal growth that makes their personality shine. By engaging in a lifelong process of personal growth, this person has become a beam of sunlight to the people around them.

When we see someone with a shining personality, we are not looking at the results of optimising the functional aspects of personal existence, but are rather looking at the outcome of

enhancing an inner spark of humanity.

True personal growth does not depend on external circumstances. Getting ahead in our careers, making money, succeeding in sports and gaining academic qualifications all depend on external circumstances that are not within our ability to control. The athletic and academic abilities that we were born with and the earning capacity that we have access to, are external to our inner personalities.

The following are 10 areas of personal growth and development, each of which can be a gateway to developing a brilliant personality.

Autonomy

It is only possible for us to experience personal growth if we are our own person and we are not swept along with other people's ideas and feelings. If we come to our own conclusions about the way things are, then we will be able to decide how we feel about the people and things around us.

> Autonomy is the ability to use your own mind and to determine your thoughts and actions in your own way. It is the ability to be master of your own life and of your own thoughts and actions. It means being able to decide and choose for yourself.
>
> You are not the object of other people's decisions and choices, and you do not accept opinions, standards of behaviour and established ways of life just because someone tells you to accept them. You accept them only because you have convinced yourself to accept them, because you have your own reasons to

do so, and because you know that you can always reject them. You shape your own life. (Spagnoli, 2003, p. 403)

Awareness

By maintaining awareness of our natural surroundings, we can remain connected to the healthy balance of the natural world, even as we go about our everyday tasks.

> Awareness requires living in the here and now, and not in the elsewhere, the past or the future. A good illustration… is driving to work in the morning in a hurry. The decisive question is: 'Where is the mind when the body is here? and there are three common cases…
>
> The fourth case is the person who is aware, and who will not hurry, because he is living in the present moment with the environment which is here: the sky and the trees as well as the feeling of motion. To hurry is to neglect that environment and to be conscious only of something that is still out of sight down the road… (Berne, 1973, p. 159)

Balance

We all contain within ourselves an infinite variety of strengths, feelings and emotions. When we encounter success that involves only one aspect of our personalities, we can be attempted to focus exclusively on that aspect of our lives, at the expense of the variety of feelings and endeavours that is the spice of life.

> We cannot become so obsessed by a beneficial habit that we lose sight of other important areas of life. (McCauley, 2005, p. 216)

Giving

If we give more that we take, we will always be able to maintain positive inner energy. Giving to things that we do not benefit from, is one way of knowing that we are honestly contributing to the net good feeling within society.

> How much love can you give? How good a friend can you be? The rewards you will gain by becoming a GIVER will reap for you true peace and a feeling of beautiful wholeness. (Ward, 2013, p. 92)

Happiness

True happiness does not depend on any external stimulus or win. Instead, true happiness is something that springs from within our own cheerfulness and spontaneity.

> 'Take a look,' I said. 'If you want to find inner happiness, go outside on a nice day with lots of sun and blue sky. Even if you stand at a window and look out over the city at the cloudless sky, like we're doing now, you'll eventually find happiness. (Frank, 2003, p. 83)

Harmony

If we live in harmony with the world and the people in it, we will be

able to tap the joie de vivre that radiates from the natural goodness of life.

> The white man calls us “Wild Indians.” We were never wild, we were just natural. Traditional people, in harmony with the world around us. We do not isolate ourselves from other living things, nor consider one creature superior to another… [The Indians are not a primitive people,] they are a traditional people, that is, a “first” or “original” people… the inheritors of a profound and exquisite wisdom distilled by long ages on this earth.
>
> The Indian concept of earth and spirit has been patronizingly dismissed as simple-hearted “naturalism” or “animism,” when in fact it derives from a holistic vision known to all mystics and great teachers of the most venerated religions of the world. (Taylor, 2011, p. 28)

Self-awareness

One of the keys to taking control of the way that we feel and of our lives is knowing who we are. A useful technique for developing self-knowledge is to mentally step outside of yourself and observe how you live and interact with other people.

> Step outside yourself. Watch yourself going through your day as if you were the star of your own television show. You can make it a comedy or a drama. Hospitals are suited to both. Try playing a laugh track in your head when something preposterous happens — as it often does.
>
> The show also keeps you company as your colleagues go home and you’re left alone in the hospital. It turns the clerks, nurses, residents from other services, and even patients into a colorful supporting cast for your lead. (Cooper, 2007, p. 146)

Self-challenge

We often have one bugbear that we are scared to face, which prevents us from taking a course of action that could have a great outcome. Challenging and overcoming our fears can open up new vistas of opportunity.

> To identify your weaknesses, ask yourself these questions: What do you keep doing that you can't seem to master? What do you least enjoy doing? What are the aspects of your personality that hold you back? What do other people identify as a weakness for you? …don't feel compelled to list every weakness you can think of.
>
> Limit yourself to the ones that can have a negative impact on the achievement of your dream. (Mashonganyika, 2013, p. 45)

Sensitivity

It can take a conscious effort for us to tune into other people's feelings. Even if someone hides what is bothering them, they may still appreciate empathy with their concerns.

> As we develop our capacity for empathy, we must shift from tuning in to our thinking to tuning in to another person's perspective. As we begin this shift, many of us will struggle with socialized thinking habits that maintain our self-focused thinking…
>
> When we start to tune in to other people's perspectives, these old habits may cause us to experience some interference. Often we first struggle with the assumption that everyone thinks and feels

as we do. This assumption occurs as we struggle to apply other people's life experiences to the situation.

First we must consider the other person's life and then extend that consideration to the current situation. If we can extend our perspective in this way, we may discover that the individual's experience is very different. (Ragg, 2011, p. 111)

Unity of purpose

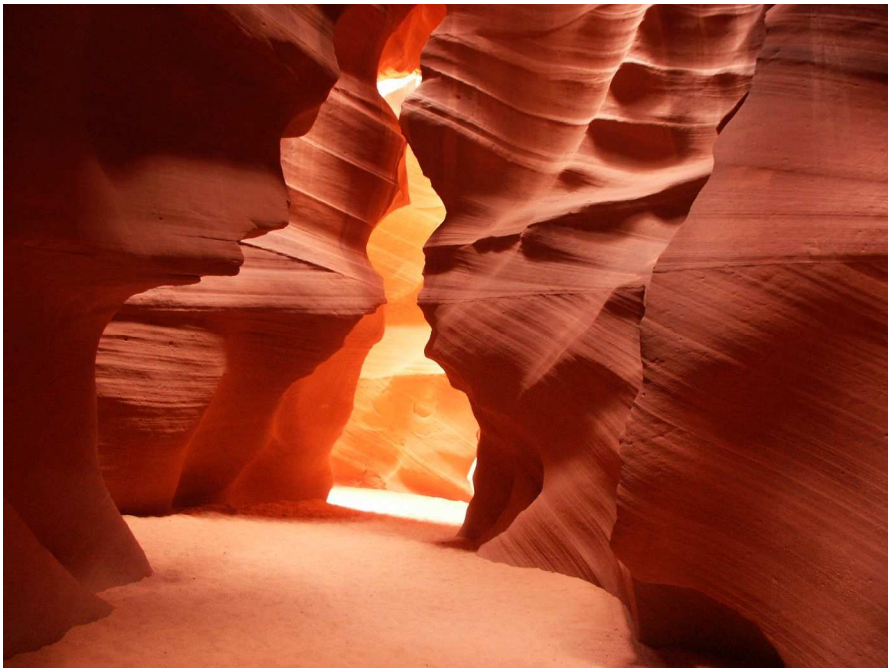
We are often attracted to disparate opportunities that pull us in different directions. However, if we head off in different directions simultaneously, we will never be able to focus our full energy on anything we do, because we will always have something diverting us at the back of our minds.

Without [inner unity] we are likely to live fragmented lives, never quite fulfilling the unique gift to human history each of us is privileged to carry. (Ramey, 1991, p. 66)

Take away

The degree to which we experience positivity in life has more to do with our internal self-actualisation, than with the level of financial or social success that we accomplish.

The opportunity for personal growth presents itself differently to every individual. It may take a while till we find the gateway that we have to pass through in order to become the unique human being that only we can be.



Antelope Canyon, Navajo Tribal Park, Arizona, U.S.A.

2. Learning and innovation

Sometimes we feel that however hard we try, we're not getting anywhere. At other times, we suddenly find inspiration and achieve a breakthrough.

To understand this sensation of uneven progress, it is worthwhile considering some of the ways in which we learn and find new knowledge.

Types of knowledge

In general terms, there are two ways that we know things. One way of knowing is when we feel that "that's just the way things are". The other way of knowing is when we have been taught information, which we accept as being true.

For example, the knowledge that a car is about to run us over, is not verbally expressed in our thoughts. If we look up while crossing the road and we see that we are in a collision course with a car, it is unlikely that the following will go through our minds:

"It would appear that given my direction of travel and the car's direction of travel, and considering our respective velocities, it is probable that the car and myself will collide in 3 seconds, which would result in severe injury."

Instead, it is more likely that we will jump out of the way as fast as possible, without thinking about our high-school applied maths. This type of knowledge is sometimes referred to as tacit knowledge,

it is “just the way things are”.

On the other hand, if someone performed an experiment to see if the earth orbits the sun or if the sun orbits the earth, then it is likely that they would mentally think through their conclusions:

“I have proven that the earth orbits the sun, and the sun does not orbit the earth”.

Since the earth’s orbit is not something that we experience directly, knowledge of the earth’s orbit has to be expressed verbally within our minds, for us to be able to think about it.

This type of knowledge is sometimes referred to as explicit knowledge. It is information that we know and are aware of, but it is not part of our lives.

> Within business and Knowledge Management, two types of knowledge are usually defined, namely explicit and tacit knowledge. The former refers to codified knowledge, such as that found in documents, while the latter refers to non-codified and often personal/experience-based knowledge. in order to understand knowledge, it is important to define these theoretical opposites.

- **Explicit Knowledge**: This type of knowledge is formalized and codified, and is sometimes referred to as know-what. It is therefore fairly easy to identify, store, and retrieve… Explicit knowledge is found in: databases, memos, notes, documents, etc.

- **Tacit Knowledge**: This type of knowledge… is sometimes referred to as know-how and refers to intuitive, hard to define

> knowledge that is largely experience based. Because of this, tacit knowledge is often context dependent and personal in nature. It is hard to communicate and deeply rooted in action, commitment, and involvement… Tacit knowledge is found in: the minds of human stakeholders. It includes cultural beliefs, values, attitudes, mental models, etc. as well as skills, capabilities and expertise.

…tacit and explicit knowledge should be seen as a spectrum rather than as definitive points; most knowledge falls on a spectrum between these two extremes. To learn the piano, we need to learn some music theory, but practice extensively to get the feel of the instrument. On the other hand, studying science is mostly based on textual information, however doing practical experiments gives us a feeling for the underlying concepts.

Therefore in practice, all knowledge is a mixture of tacit and explicit elements rather than being one or the other. (Frost, 2017)

Knowledge and reality

Another interesting aspect of our ability to know about things, is as follows:

Since knowledge is an extension of our natural understanding of reality, all of our knowledge must be somehow linked to an actual feeling or perception that we have personally felt or experienced.

Theoretical knowledge cannot exist within our minds, unless it is somehow linked to a real life experience that is meaningful to us. In other words, all explicit knowledge must be rooted in our tacit

knowledge, somehow.

> Explicit knowledge is [sometimes] presented as a universally comprehensible commodity, which can be stored in a knowledge archive, shared with colleagues or clicked across cyberspace…
>
> In an incisive essay entitled 'Do we really understand tacit knowledge?', Haridimos Tsoukas (2003) makes the crucial point that… short of a brain transplant, the capacity to know is not a transferable commodity: it is inherently personal and inherently tacit: 'All knowledge falls into one of these two classes: it is either tacit or rooted in tacit knowledge' (Polanyi, 1967: 195, original emphasis)… 'The ideal of a strictly explicit knowledge is indeed self-contradictory; deprived of their tacit coefficients, all spoken words, all formulae, all maps and graphs, are strictly meaningless.
>
> An exact mathematical theory means nothing unless we recognise an inexact non-mathematical knowledge on which it bears and a person whose judgement upholds this bearing.' (Polanyi, 1967). (Chris Carter, 2008, p.62)

However, if we assume that all knowledge is rooted in our personal perceptions and feelings, it is difficult to understand how we can ever learn from anyone else.

Our mentor's knowledge is predicated on their own personal feelings and experiences. If so, how can we absorb the knowledge that they verbally transmit to us, when we do not share the feelings and experiences that their own knowledge is rooted in?

Borrowing intuition

In addition to simply transmitting knowledge, every good teacher develops a personal connection with their students. The teacher will enthuse their students with their passion for the subject, and make them feel that they are part of a journey of discovery and exploration.

> One can amass textual knowledge, but without that personal connection to the teacher, without the absorption of the teacher's way of learning… – and especially without emulating his or her way of embodying what is taught, then [the student remains] not only ignorant but [worse, when they themselves come to teach, they are like a] sorcerer!
>
> [A teacher who can repeat the words, but never understood their own mentor's inner meaning] just mumbles magic words, produces some dazzling temporary effects, and the student is duped. We all have had teachers like this, I suspect, and know the unfortunate students… who imitate this magical mumbling. (Handelman, 2012, p.74)

A good teacher shows their students how the knowledge that they are teaching resonates within them. When a teacher shows how their own knowledge lightens up their world, the teacher allows the students to borrow their perspective on reality. This allows the students to absorb the knowledge being taught. "If it is meaningful for the teacher, then it must be true."

In other words, the students use the teacher's tacit knowledge as a basis for absorbing the explicit knowledge that they are taught. It may take the students years to develop their own inner grasp of these foundational truths, however.

Subsequently we can identify an advantage and a disadvantage in the learning experience. An advantage is that we can borrow our teachers' intuition to base our knowledge on. A disadvantage is that, as long as our knowledge is based on our teachers' perceptions, we will be limited to thinking along the same lines as our teachers.

Achieving brilliance can only happen when we align our learned knowledge with our own wellsprings of understanding. Doing this enables us to feel our way through our own knowledge, from fundamental principle to fine detail, and then to find new vision and insight.

Take away

The "aha" moment of inspiration, occurs when our natural intuitions and our technical knowledge, align with each other. When this happens, we become able to feel our way through the complexities that face us, and find the simple but brilliant solutions that result from the synthesis of instinct and intricacy.

However, as long as we rely on the intuitions that were lent to us by our teachers, our own intuition cannot enhance our understanding of our academic knowledge.

Only once we autonomously perceive the underlying truths of our learned knowledge, can we experience the convergence of tacit and explicit knowledge that results in a breakthrough.

3. Thought building blocks

In our everyday lives, it seems natural for us to talk about the things that are processed by the company that we work for. We go to work and we talk about insurance policies, home-loans, phone-plans, children's board games, magazines, fast-food meals and stocks and shares.

When we have these conversations, we take it for granted that we are talking about real and factual things. We do not see that there is any difference between talking about a loaf of bread and talking about the financial position of a public limited company.

The reality however is, that when we talk about anything that is meaningful to us, we have already formed a concept in our minds about the nature of the thing under discussion. That means, we have translated the actual item into an abstract concept that represents to us the inherent nature of the item.

Without this ability to create abstract concepts in our minds, we would be unable to make value judgments or think about how different things fit together.

> Concepts are like the air we breathe. They are everywhere. They are essential to our life, but we rarely notice them. *Yet only when we have conceptualized a thing in some way can we think about it*. Nature does not give us instruction in how things are to be conceptualized. We must create that conceptualization, alone or with others. Once it is conceptualized, we integrate a thing into a network of ideas (as no concept stands alone).
>
> We humans approach virtually everything in our experience as something that can be "decoded." Things are given meaning by

> the power of our mind to create a conceptualization and to make inferences on the basis of it – hence, we create further conceptualizations. We do this so routinely and automatically that we don't typically recognize ourselves as engaged in these processes….
>
> …it is precisely this capacity [to create concepts through which we see and experience the world] of which you must take charge in taking command of your thinking. You must become the master of your own conceptualizations… (Richard Paul, 2013, p. 99)

Our ability to create concepts within our minds is the bedrock on which our reasoning rests. The concepts that we form in our minds determine the value judgments and logical associations that we can subsequently make.

In reality, therefore, before we even begin to think about a problem we have already determined the way that our thoughts will proceed and the possibilities that we will be able to identify, by choosing to conceptualise the items at hand in a particular way.

Conceptual decisions

When we transform the things in the world around us into abstract concepts, we make qualitative decisions about how we will view these things from now on. The subtlety of these decisions is as nuanced as life itself, however it is possible to identify some basic choices we make when deciding how to decipher reality.

- **Personal or impersonal**: Some ideas are close to our feelings, other ideas we hold at an arm's length. We can choose to

relate to something in a close and personal manner, or we can choose to view the same thing impartially and from a distance.

For instance, a worker in a factory may relate to their work with pride and satisfaction, but it is likely that an accountant in head-office will relate to the worker's output from a purely financial perspective. The worker sees the inherent goodness in what they produce, the accountant perceives the commercial usefulness of the same thing.

Both of these conceptualisations are valid; the worker has adopted a personal view and the accountant has adopted an impersonal view, of the same reality.

The accountant's impersonal conceptualisation is fitting for their job, their impersonal approach enables them to determine the correct course of action needed for the financial wellbeing of the company. Were they to be passionate, they would be unable to make decisions that could involve cutting a particular product or service, for example.

However, the worker's personal perspective is fitting for their job. Because of their personal involvement, they will apply the best of their skills and knowledge to ensure that they can take pride in the quality and robustness of their work.

- **Important or trivial**: We can conceptualise something as having minute relevance to ourselves, or as being overwhelmingly important.

For example, some people may ignore a minor skin blemish, but other people may pay thousands of dollars to have it invisibly removed. Alternatively, some people may feel it is important to prevent the destruction of natural habitats, but other people may feel this is a minor detail in improving farm productivity.

Our decision to spend time and energy on something, often depends on how significant we think the thing is.

Subsequently, it is important to realise how our initial perceptions influence our subsequent course of action. Otherwise, we may pay too much attention to something insignificant, or too little attention to something that could have great potential.

- **Controllable or uncontrollable**: Sometimes we perceive that we have influence over something, at other times we live with an attitude of "that is just the way things are". That means, we may choose to view something as being under our influence, or we may prefer to feel that it is unalterable and that nothing we could possibly do would have any bearing on the outcome.

  For example, we can view the variable quality of manufactured goods as something that is due to natural circumstance and that is beyond our control. Or we can view the variable quality of manufactured goods as something which we can improve on using precision technology and equipment.

  Alternatively, we may see the pollution in the city that we

live in as something which is an inevitable part of living an urban environment, or we may see pollution as something that we can eliminate through petitioning to change local traffic regulations.

If we perceive that we have influence over an outcome, but in reality we don't, we may waste our efforts and achieve no results despite a lot of hard work. If we believe that we don't have influence over an outcome, but in fact we do, we could miss out on an opportunity that was easily within our grasp.

Feeling your way

When we assess reality, we have to decide whether we are seeing something new, or if we are seeing something that we can categorise according to prior experience and knowledge. There may be some aspects of an experience that we can categorise in accordance with our previous knowledge, and other aspects of the same experience that we discern as new and original.

Sometimes the best way to perceive what is genuinely new and fresh in what we are seeing, is to connect to the experience and let it wash over us. We can then retroactively think about the way the experience made us feel, and see if we tasted something new.

We set every new fact or impression in the framework and light of our existing knowledge, and this "apperception," as it is called, is a large and vital factor in all our knowledge.

We thus see things, not only as they are, but also as we are. The mind itself is an active and determining agent in forming our knowledge. Every one thus sees his own objects and creates his

> own world. It is these differences in minds that make the immense differences in the things men see. When Turner showed one of his sunsets to a friend and the friend remarked that he had never seen such a sunset, Turner replied, “Don’t you wish you could?”…
>
> These… constructs are the representatives in our minds of the realities of the objective world, and therefore it is of the first importance that they represent them accurately… Any inaccuracy or error in them… may undermine and ruin our whole structure of thought and life. (Snowden, 1916, p. 29)

The best way to understand the nature of new things that we see and experience is to let them talk for themselves. If we approach new experiences with an open mind, we are likely to be able to discern the true essence of what we are looking at.

However, if we approach new situations with preconceived ideas, we are likely to see what we expect to see, and miss new insights that we could have gained.

Take away

It can be a struggle for us not to project what we expect to see, onto what we are actually seeing. By keeping an open mind, we can discern the subtle innuendoes that hint at the true essence of what we encounter.

However if we retrofit new experiences into what we are expecting, we may miss new vistas of growth and opportunity.

> One day, I received a cutting from a Chinese business magazine. It had interviewed a famous visitor from the West, one of those

> rare people who has influenced almost everyone's life all over the globe. He had been my student some thirty years earlier; he became the venture capitalist who was the first to invest in Google, Yahoo, eBay, humble start-ups that eventually changed the world.
>
> He was asked who had been the greatest influence on his career. He named me, and gave this reason: I had taught him that things are not what they appear to be.
>
> It is unusual for a teacher to be understood by a pupil. But he saw precisely the true measure of my ignorance. Every time I encounter an object, a person or an experience, I do not see only it, but also how else it could be. I am always asking myself: How could it be otherwise?…
>
> The process of creating something useful and beautiful out of what I learn does not resemble building a house out of bricks that have been ordered in advance. It is more like painting a picture which gradually takes shape.
>
> As I add and subtract colours and contours, each opens up possibilities that I did not imagine beforehand, and I rush off to deepen my understanding of them, and research new territories, which in turn open up new vistas and new meanings for the too naive or simple thoughts I began with. (Zeldin, 2015, p. 312)

Life is full of opportunity, but in order to be able to connect to this flow of energy, we may have to draw back the curtain of assumptions that we live safely behind.



The Dead Sea (Israel) just after sunrise, seen from the top of the fortress of Massada

Section II - You and Work

Some thoughts about the ways in which we interact with the modern submersive work environment.

4. Career growth and happiness

It can sometimes seem that we have a conflict of interests between our personal lives and our career development. Perhaps career progression will only happen if we shortchange ourselves in our personal lives, or maybe our personal lives will only be complete if we sacrifice career growth.

> All too often…, leaders and managers become so consumed in climbing the corporate ladder, or working to ensure that they do not move down the ladder, that lose focus of what is really important in life…
>
> Can you really be successful in the office and at home? Can you be successful at both without shorting one or the other?.. Are you willing to sacrifice family for professional achievement? Some folks are.. How many times have you heard someone say, "I wish had spent more time with my children when they were growing up."?..
>
> Is the price worth it? Assess your personal situation and decide where to place your dedication and determination. (Walden, 2009, p. 87)

Does there have to be a contradiction between career growth and achieving personal happiness, or is there a way to find harmony between these different facets of our existence?

Naturalness

One of the most important ingredients of a successful personal life is the ability to be natural and spontaneous. For example, we often find happiness when we allow our thoughts and feelings to wander

wherever they want to go. In our working lives however, we tend to assume a stricter and more self-conscious mode of existence.

Two of the factors that persuade us to leave our natural selves behind when we enter the workplace are:

- **Time pressure**: In our personal lives, our feelings and thoughts develop at their own natural pace. In the workplace, on the other hand, our activities are timebound. Work must happen within its allotted time slot, otherwise the downstream processes that depend on our output will come to a stop.

- **Conformity**: In our personal lives, we value self-expression and search for our unique individuality. In our work life, on the other hand, we conform to the ways of thinking, feeling and doing of the company that we work for, so that we can blend into the workplace dynamic.

The need to meet targets on time, and the pressure to conform to the company's way of thinking, pushes us into a task-focused frame of mind that can make us lose touch with our natural selves.

> Children have a natural grace which asserts itself easily, but which is rarely seen in the sophisticated adult except in persons with a great natural sweetness of mind.
>
> Innocent moments are of greater value in the adult – they bring a more complex being and a wider knowledge into balance than in the case of the child – but such moments are infrequent of the difficulty experienced by a mature person in coming to terms with a complicated world….
>
> The child shows an interest in the minute details of objects. He wonders at things and is fascinated by them. The cultivated

> adult, on the other hand, fails to observe much of what goes on about him, subordinates his activities to his interests, has little left to wonder at, and is too confident of his knowledge of things to find them fascinating… (Gillham, 1973, p. 14)

If we lose the naturalness that is essential to our personal lives, we are likely to make decisions that could adversely impact the relationships that are crucial to us.

How can we make sure that our natural freshness is not dulled by the daily grind?

Thriving from challenge

When we encounter pressure to perform, we experience a sense of uncertainty. "Will we be able to meet the challenge, or will we fall short?"

There are two ways that we can respond to this quandary. We can either feel exhilarated, and rise to meet the challenge that has been put to us. Or we can feel dismayed by the expectations that have been placed on us, and tense ourselves up to desperately try to meet our targets.

> The experience of uncertainty can vary: it can be an exhilarating challenge to be confronted and resolved – it is exciting and makes us feel edgy and alive, and delivers us a sense of satisfaction and mastery when we resolve [the situation]; or it can be anxiety provoking and stressful, making us feel impotent and unable to predict or control our world and what will happen to us in it.

> …if we believe our resources to deal with the demand[s placed on us] are adequate, we feel a sense of [excitement that makes us meet the challenge head on.] if we believe our resources are inadequate, we feel a sense of threat that [makes us shrink away and ignore the challenge as much as possible]. (Paul A M Van Lange, 2011, p. 65)

Being upbeat about the challenges we face, releases our inner aptitudes and enables us to grow from the challenge.

If we feel overwhelmed, on the other hand, our feeling of inadequacy makes us close up, and becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Two ways in which a positive frame of mind provides us with the abilities that we need to win are:

- **Finding new possibilities**: If we feel secure in our capability to ultimately solve the problem, then we allow ourselves time to look around for new ideas. If we feel threatened by the challenge, however, then we can't afford to admit that we do not already possess the tools and knowledge needed to solve the problem, as this would make us feel more threatened.

  Subsequently we may try to force a non-optimal solution, using the knowledge that is immediately available, instead of looking for fresh insights.

- **Intuition**: Intuition happens when we allow ourselves to park a problem in the back of our minds. Our subconscious then makes the connection between our understanding in other areas and the problem with which we are faced. If we

agitatedly turn the problem round and round in our minds however, we will never experience the deep understanding that comes when our background thought processes are allowed to free wheel.

Take away

If we grow to meet the challenges that we face at work, this releases energy that grows our natural vitality. The positivity that this creates provides strength and dynamism in our personal lives, which in turn becomes the base from which we can approach new work challenges with confidence and optimism.

This positive feedback loop can become the gateway for us to operate at an entirely new level.

5. Avoiding burn-out

In order to have a great work-life balance we need to go through periods of

- Activity and rest
- High energy and low energy
- Involvement and standing back
- Concentration and reflection

In order to acquire the ability to consciously move between our high-energy state and our low-energy state, we need to make a clear separation between our professional lives and our home lives. We will then be able to decide when to emotionally enter the super-charged office mentality and when to emotionally leave the office for our home life of relaxation and personal focus.

Without the ability to "switch off", we can end up burning through the natural emotional barriers that are designed to protect our inner selves.

It's a bit like a racing car engine, you may have to accelerate to overtake, but if you keep the engine going at full revs, it will burn out and crash somewhere along the line.

Try going through the following list of questions to see how hard you are revving your internal engine.

	Relaxing	Revving
Do you think about work over weekends?	No ☐	Yes ☐
Do you feel that you always have to be doing something?	No ☐	Yes ☐
Are you proud of your work?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Are you contactable by the office on your annual holiday?	No ☐	Yes ☐
Will you have interests to pursue after you retire?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Is your life centred around your career plans?	No ☐	Yes ☐
Do you keep yourself going on coffee?	No ☐	Yes ☐
Is work fun?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Do you dream about work problems?	No ☐	Yes ☐
Do you work over weekends?	No ☐	Yes ☐
Do you think your job is important to society?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Is your mind constantly active 24x7?	No ☐	Yes ☐
Can you laugh at your mistakes?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Are you scared you may get something wrong at work?	No ☐	Yes ☐
If work was adversely affecting your relationship with your partner, would you quit?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Do you regret your career choice?	No ☐	Yes ☐
Do you sleep enough?	Yes ☐	No ☐
Do you want your greatest life accomplishment to have been your career?	No ☐	Yes ☐
Total		

If you are relaxing more than you are revving, then you are maintaining a sustainable pace.

Otherwise, watch out for burn out!

Regaining balance

The reason we involve ourselves heavily in our work is because we want to experience self-actualisation; we want to feel that we are accomplishing something important and exciting.

However, this can become a trap; the self-actualisation that we experience at work can be a run-away success that leads us away from our true inner-selves.

> Don't let success go to your head: If you don't keep your feet on the ground, and your mind together, you could easily lose everything that you worked hard for. (Cooper P. , 2014, p. 32)

Take away

In order to live a full life, there has to be positive feedback between our personal lives and our work lives.

If the bustle at work makes us appreciate the serenity of our personal life, and the calm of our personal life is the reference point by which we measure our success at work, then we can accomplish a full and harmonious existence.

6. Job specialisation and career progression

People sometimes find that the dream-job that they once landed has become a source of frustration and exasperation. As hard as they try, they cannot see how they can gain any personal or career development by continuing in their current position.

What changed between their initial thrill of getting a job and their present feeling that they have hit a brick wall?

Learning from children's books

Children's books can provide simple lessons that resonate with our life experiences. Bob Graham is a popular author of children's books who encapsulates compelling life-lessons in his narratives.

One of Bob Graham's storybook characters is a multi-talented dog called Buffy. When Buffy is fired for being too good, he is challenged to re-think life, reinvent himself and find happiness on his own terms.

This is Buffy's story:

- Buffy was a stage assistant to Brillo the magician; however, Brillo found that the audience was cheering louder for Buffy than for himself, so Buffy was made redundant.

  "'OUT! and never come back,' cried Brillo."



- With his last coins, Buffy bought a tin of dog food and a can opener from a supermarket. Then he jumped aboard a moving freight train that was heading into the countryside.

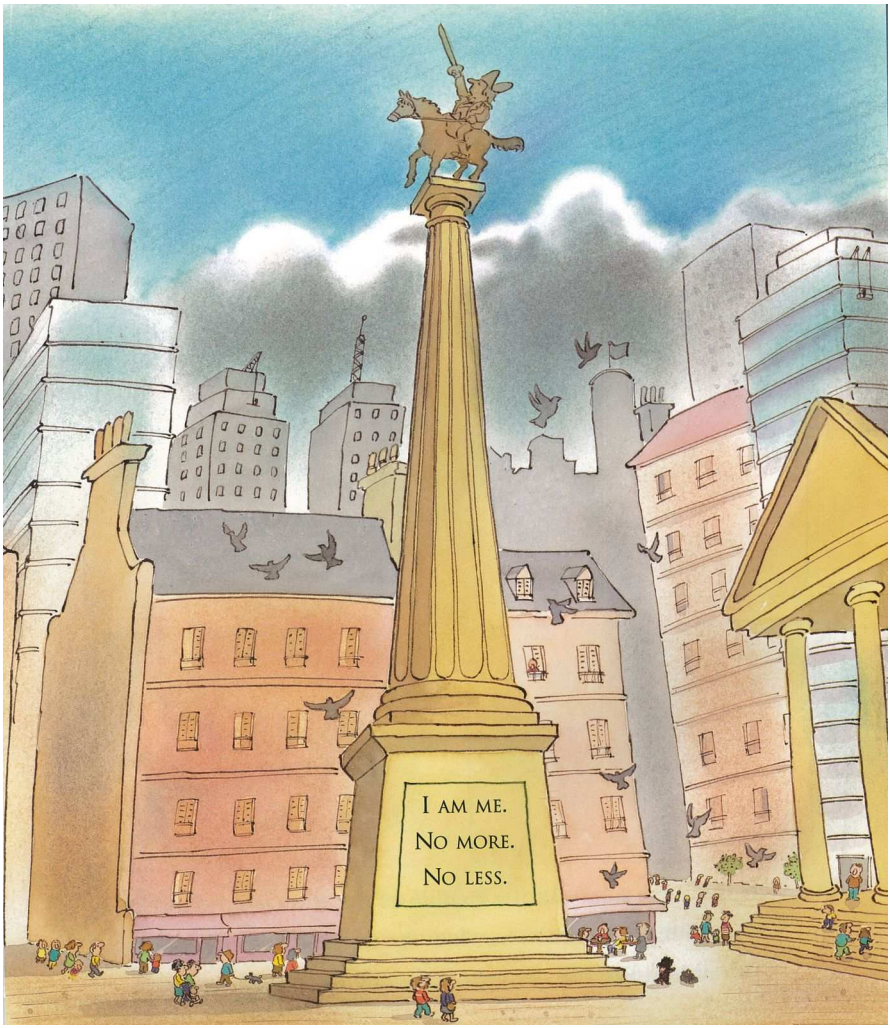
  "And while he slept, the train continued its rhythm:
  OUT, OUT…
  and never come back.
  OUT, OUT…
  and never come back."

- In the morning, Buffy jumped off the train and went to find a job. However Buffy was unemployable because he did not fit into a slot.

  "Nobody wanted a dancing sheep dog.
  Nobody wanted a tiny rope-throwing cattle dog.
  Nobody wanted a plate-juggling kitchen dog.
  Nobody wanted a guard dog who played the harmonica."

- One day, exhausted, Buffy stopped in front of a statue in a town square. The statue was inscribed with the words "I am me. No more. No less". Buffy decided that the world would have to accept him on his own terms.

  "Then one day Buffy stopped. He put down his bag, wiped his brow and looked around him.
  'I can go no further,' he said.
  'I'm not a sheep dog, a cattle dog, a kitchen dog or a guard dog. So what sort of dog am I?'
  'I am Buffy! And I will do what I do. And this time, the world shall come to me.'"



- Buffy started busking, and met Mary Kelly and the musical Kelly family. The Kelly's acknowledged his unique talents and adopted him.

  "Now, each night after dinner, the music starts and each night the floorboards shake. Mary's and Buffy's feet beat to the rhythm of the jigs and the reels.

And Buffy lives up there, on the hill, to this day."



(Graham, 2008)

Self-actualisation versus specialisation

When we get a job, we are excited because it took all of our persistence, hard work and study to acquire the skills and knowledge needed for the job.

Nevertheless, as Buffy found out, most jobs require a specific skill

set, and do not involve all facets of our personalities. Furthermore, the larger a company is, the smaller part every employee plays in the creation of the finished product, and the more specialised each job becomes.

Subsequently, the reason we may not find fulfilment at work, is because the job is not us.

- We are multi-talented – but the job requires that we focus and refine one specific skill.
- We are innovative – but the job requires that we do exactly the same thing every day.
- We like relating to people in different ways – but the job requires that we should relate to people predictably.

Thinking out of the square

It is perfectly possible, that we will not find a job on a job board that requires all of our skills and that involves all facets of our personalities. Because of this, some people are leaving the standard career path to look for greater versatility.

> Rather than define their lives and self-worth in terms of a preordained, often constraining, career track, workers are creating their own patchworks of job experiences to suit their lives. (Lisa A. Mainiero, 2006, p. 2)

It is also possible, however, that we may not want to risk leaving the security of a standard career path. If so, how can we grow within a job that does not seem to require all that we have to give?

According to the Harvard Business Review, the answer is to make sure that there is always something happening in our lives, outside of working hours.

> The bottom line:
>
> Satisfaction at work is influenced by factors such as benefits, pay, relationships, and commute length.
>
> But all of this boils down to two things being important, regardless of your circumstances: (1) having a life outside of work, and (2) having the money to afford it. If you have a job that grants you both of these, you might be happier than you realize. (Zilca, 2017)

If we lead full and vibrant lives outside of work, then regardless of our jobs' limitations, we will be able to integrate our working hours into a complete and harmonious existence.

Leading a full life can give us a boost that will make us better at our jobs, and that will allow us to bring warmth and humanity to our place of employment.

Take away

Although our jobs may require predictability, if we can carry on polishing our professional skills and growing as human beings, opportunity may knock in unexpected ways, just as it did for Buffy.

7. Home mindset and work mindset

Getting a job and earning money do not always guarantee that we will enjoy a life of satisfaction and happiness.

> 'The paradox of prosperity' (1999), a paper prepared for the Salvation Army by the Henley Centre, argues that although material prosperity is increasing in western society, the chances of a fulfilling life are decreasing. By 2010 more people will experience life stress, fewer people will find satisfying relationships, fewer people will feel secure and 'safe' and fewer people will be able to meet the conditions for self-actualisation. (Stretch, 2002, p. 302)

This is odd, as it would seem that if we are financially successful and earning money that we can spend on the things that are important to us, then our earning power should automatically strengthen our personal lives.

Are career involvement and success in our personal lives fundamentally incompatible, or is it just a question of finding the right balance?

High-energy and low-energy states

The way that we feel and think at home is very different to the way that we feel and think at work. At home we are in a relaxed, low energy mode. Our office mindset, on the other hand, is high energy and focused.

Over the course of 24 hours, we oscillate from our serene low-

energy home mindset to the high-energy office mentality, and then back to our low-energy state when we go home.

> The journey to work is not only a physical transportation, but also a psychological transformation from the home persona to the work persona. In her book Home and Work (1996), Christena Nippert-Eng described how people go through a set of rituals to move from their home mentality to their work mentality.
>
> The separation between home and workplace is not just a spatial one; the two environments correspond to two social identities. Nippert-Eng's respondents had elaborate techniques and habits to shed their home mentality in the work and get into the work mentality, and then leave the professional mode behind them in the evening to resume their private persona at home. These practices could be as simple as putting on specific clothes for each environment, reading the newspaper, drinking coffee or having beer at the end of the day. (Heather A. Horst, 2013, p. 133)

This constant change is healthy and refreshing. On the way to work we psyche ourselves up into the high-energy office mentality. When we get back home, we unwind, tell over amusing anecdotes from the workplace and laugh at office frustrations. Our down time at home rejuvenates us for another day on the office and our energetic work life provides the impetus for us to progress with our personal lives.

Is there something that can disrupt this healthy cycle, so that we become unable to bring our relaxed home mood to the office, or we become unable to bring our work energy back home?

Uneven energy

By nature, we are complex beings and display the different facets of our personalities in different situations. For example, sometimes we enjoy having fun, sometimes we engage in intellectually stimulating activities and sometimes we enjoy providing guidance to others and helping people out.

> All the world's a stage
>
> And all the men and women merely players
>
> They have their exits and their entrances
>
> And one man in his time plays many parts
>
> (Shakespeare, 1953, 2, 7, 1-4)

However, the high-energy attitude we assume at work may positively exclude us from involving all aspects of our personalities in our jobs.

For example:

- The manager who is trying to explain his point of view at a board meeting is probably not thinking about finding oneness with nature.
- The share trader who is trying to determine the market direction is probably not thinking about playing with their kids.
- The bartender who is dispensing drinks and chatting with customers, is probably not thinking about how they will pay off their mortgage.

Subsequently, in the course of going about our work, we may encounter the following circumstances.

- Our job only involves specific aspects of our personalities.

and

- We move into a high-energy frame of mind in order to meet the challenges of doing our jobs.

so that

- We become unevenly energised; the parts of our personalities that we activate at work, become stronger. However the parts of our personalities that we do not need at work, are forgotten and left behind.

Becoming trapped in our work mindset

The healthy oscillation between our low-energy home mindset and our high-energy work mode, depends on our ability to reset back to our natural selves, when we go back home.

However, if only one aspect of our personalities is involved in our work, then work pressures may push us to consistently think and feel in a particular way.

If this happens, then even when we go home to relax, our thoughts and feelings will tend to follow along the same lines that we are used to at work. Subsequently, we will be unable to escape from our work mentality, as our personalities will start to become centered around the patterns of thought and behaviour that we engage in at

work.

Take away

Due to the increasing role specialisation of the modern workplace, it is likely that our jobs will place pressure on us to adopt a particular attitude and act in a particular way. However, this does not necessarily mean that we want to become “that type of person”.

If we are objectively aware of the persona that we project at work, then we will be able to ensure that when we return home, we can take off the emotional “work clothes” that we wore during the day, and reset to our simple, natural state.

8. The creative will

Being creative and thinking of new ideas often requires unlearning the predictable patterns in which we tend to think.

Instead of looking for techniques to make us become innovative, we may find that we can be naturally inventive as long as we are not hampered by our preconceived notions.

Considering the different modes in which we think, can help us free up our minds and consciously direct our inventiveness.

Creativity and imagination

We normally think that the most important talent for coming up with new ideas is imagination, if we have a good imagination, then we can be the "ideas man". However, there is a precursor to imagination, which is our wish to be creative.

Innovation starts with the feeling that by applying our creative-will, we can somehow make the world a better place. Subsequently, we imagine the type of thing that could help people, according to our nature and field of expertise. We then select the most promising idea, and start working through the challenges of implementation.

In other words, our creative will first finds its expression through our imagination and then embodies itself in practical application.

> the image [that we imagine] is not a state… but a consciousness… the imaging consciousness… is spontaneous

> and creative… the image… in so far as it is primary and incommunicable, is the product of a conscious activity, is shot through with a flow of creative will. (Sartre, 2004, p. 15)

Division of labour

The inventive phases of creative-will, imagination, resolution and development, are not necessarily performed by one person.

In a corporate environment, the general "direction to advance in", may come from management. The product development team may be tasked with coming up with possible ideas and selecting the best proposal. The research and development department may be tasked with turning these ideas into practical reality. And the manufacturing division will turn out the finished product.

Innovation can occur anywhere along this journey from abstraction to reality.

For example, management may feel that the company should move in a new direction. The product development team may conceptualise a new product that breaks with existing norms. The research and development team may make a technological breakthrough. And the manufacturing division may gain unprecedented efficiencies.

However, the higher up the innovation-chain a fresh approach is applied, the greater the innovation will be. For example, if management decide on a new direction, the ripple effect of originality through the company will be far greater than if a production manager makes a process more efficient.

Professor Ikujiro Nonaka of the Hitotsubashi University, gives the following example of how a fresh approach from high-level management, can filter down the chain of innovation, until it results in the creation of the knowledge that is needed to realise the management vision.

> In 1978, top management at Honda inaugurated the development of a new-concept car with the slogan "Let's gamble." The phrase expressed senior executives' conviction that Honda's Civic and Accord models were becoming too familiar. Managers also realized that along with a new postwar generation entering the car market, a new generation of young product designers was coming of age with unconventional ideas about what made a good car.
>
> The business decision that followed from the "Let's gamble" slogan was to form a new-product development team of young engineers and designers (the average age was 27). Top management charged the team with two—and only two—instructions: first, to come up with a product concept fundamentally different from anything the company had ever done before; and second, to make a car that was inexpensive but not cheap…
>
> Project team leader Hiroo Watanabe coined another slogan to express his sense of the team's ambitious challenge: Theory of Automobile Evolution. The phrase described an ideal. In effect, it posed the question, If the automobile were an organism, how should it evolve? As team members argued and discussed what Watanabe's slogan might possibly mean, they came up with an answer in the form of yet another slogan: "man-maximum, machine-minimum." This captured the team's belief that the ideal car should somehow transcend the traditional human-machine relationship…

> The “evolutionary” trend the team articulated eventually came to be embodied in the image of a sphere—a car simultaneously “short” (in length) and “tall” (in height). Such a car, they reasoned, would be lighter and cheaper but also more comfortable and more solid than traditional cars. A sphere provided the most room for the passenger while taking up the least amount of space on the road. What’s more, the shape minimized the space taken up by the engine and other mechanical systems. This gave birth to a product concept the team called “Tall Boy,” which eventually led to the Honda City, the company’s distinctive urban car.
>
> …the City’s revolutionary styling and engineering were prophetic. The car inaugurated a whole new approach to design in the Japanese auto industry based on the man-maximum, machine-minimum concept, which has led to the new generation of “tall and short” cars now quite prevalent in Japan… (Ikujirō Nonaka, 1995, p. 11)

Honda achieved a quantum leap forward because management’s encouragement to be creative started without any preconceived notions of what the company’s future products would be.

This pure creative-will filtered down through the company’s echelons and allowed the engineering team to imagine an unfamiliar shape of car, which totally broke with the conventional wisdom of what a car should look like.

Dynamism and creativity

There is only one thing more fundamental to creativity than the will to be creative, and that is the degree to which we are connected to

the exuberance and zest of life itself.

We can fire up our imagination and allow our thoughts to lead us in whichever direction they want to go, however the degree to which we can spark our creative-will altogether, depends on our commitment to experiencing the pure joy of living in all areas of life.

> As human beings, we are driven to grow and learn, to move forward… We are driven to reinvent our world and ourselves. Human creativity is intrinsic to our nature. Our desire to create is fundamental to our essence, central to what makes us human.
>
> …The building of a house is an expression of our creative drive. The nursing of a patient is an expression of our creative drive. The teaching of a child is an expression of our creative drive. The raising of a family is an expression of our creative drive. The writing of a novel or of a book on economics is an expression of our creative drive. Our… expression is as diverse as we are unique, as varied as our dreams.
>
> As such, our… expression is as abundant as the creative activity that brought it into being. We are as prolific as we are creative. The greater our creative activity, the greater its impact on our material world. (Bedogne, 2009, p.58)

Take away

Creativity and imagination are part of who we are. If we live in a fresh and energetic way, our creative-will will show us the way forward when conventional knowledge and know-how draw a blank.



Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson visited with Goddard's Space Flight Center Director Chris Scolese and the James Webb Space Telescope team at Goddard in Greenbelt, Md. on June 3, 2014. Tyson spoke to the team and was able to see the giant vacuum test chamber that now holds the heart of the telescope, the Integrated Science Instrument Module

9. Skills diversification

Generally speaking, career development can proceed in one of two directions.

- **Specialisation**: You become an expert in your domain. As your expertise grows, people seek your advice and value your opinion. Eventually you may become an acknowledged authority in your chosen area.
- **Diversification**: You acquire knowledge in disparate domains, e.g. medicine and IT. Using your overarching knowledge, you identify the opportunity to create new products and services by combining ideas from these domains. You then apply your cross-domain understanding to bring your ideas to fruition.

Diversifying skills holds great potential; if there is a natural synergy between our existing skill base and our newfound knowledge, then we can make a bold move forward in our careers. However, acquiring skills and knowledge that do not relate directly to what we currently do can lead to a dead-end. We may do a great course or read an interesting book, but end up with information that we are unable to integrate into our existing professional knowledge.

How can we plan successful career diversification with the confidence that our new talent will be a scintillating supplement to our base competencies?

Interestingly, companies considering diversification face a similar quandary, and lessons from their decision-making process can be applied to individual's career decisions.

Company diversification

According to the Harvard Business Review, when companies consider diversification, they should not simply look at the products and services that they provide and expand on this base. Instead, they should go one level deeper and understand what the underlying organisational strengths are that make them good at what they do.

Once a company has identified the strengths that enable it to deliver well, it can consider how these strengths can be applied to the operations of new businesses.

In other words, the true strategic assets of a company do not lie in the bricks-and-mortar of the business, because this can be imitated by competitors. Instead, the true strategic assets of a company are the ingrained organisational strengths, the flexibility and the determination that make the company good at what it does.

Once these underlying strengths have been identified, the company can consider diversification based on the value they can add through injecting these strengths into new acquisitions.

> Consider the case of Blue Circle Industries, a British company that is one of the world's leading cement producers. In the 1980s, Blue Circle decided to diversify… It was, the company's managers determined, in the business of making products related to home building. So Blue Circle expanded into real estate, bricks, waste management, gas stoves, bath-tubs – even lawn mowers. According to one retired executive, "Our move into lawn mowers was based on the logic that you need a lawn mower for your garden – which, after all, is next to your house."

Not surprisingly, few of Blue Circle's diversification forays proved successful.

Blue Circle's less focused, business-definition approach to diversification didn't answer the more relevant question: What are our company's strategic assets, and how and where can we make the best use of them?

One company that did ask that question – and reaped the rewards – is the United Kingdom's Boddington Group. In 1989, Boddington's then chairman, Denis Cassidy, assessed the company's competitive situation. At the time, Boddington was a vertically integrated beer producer that owned a brewery, wholesalers, and pubs throughout the country. But consolidation was changing the beer industry, making it hard for small players like Boddington to make a profit. The company had survived up to that point because its main strategic asset was in retailing and hospitality: it excelled at managing pubs. So Cassidy decided to diversify in that direction.

Quickly, the company sold off the brewery and acquired resort hotels, restaurants, nursing homes, and health clubs while keeping its large portfolio of pubs. "The decision to abandon brewing was a painful one, especially because the brewery has been a part of us for more than 200 years," Cassidy says. "But given the changes taking place in the business, we realized we could not play the brewing game with the big boys. We decided to build on our excellent skills in retailing, hospitality, and property management to start a new game."

Boddington's diversification resulted in the creation of enormous shareholder value – especially when compared with the strategies adopted by regional brewers that decided to remain in the business. It also illustrates what happens when a company moves beyond a business-definition approach and instead

> launches a diversification effort based on its strategic assets. (Markides, 1997)

To diversify successfully, companies need to look within to understand why they are good at what they do, and then use these unique strategic assets as a base for diversification.

Similarly, we can make a quantum leap forward in our careers by identifying our unique inner strengths, acquiring hard skills that these strengths can be applied to and then creating synergy between our base skill-set and our newfound knowledge.

Meta-skills

Professor Gerald Grow is the professor of magazine journalism at Florida A&M University. He describes the personal qualities that provide the base for the application of professional skills as meta-skills, i.e. skill enabling skills. In a discussion concerning journalism he writes:

> Every profession is based on both skills and metaskills. Skills are the activities people have to perform well – like reporting, writing, attributing quotes properly and avoiding libel. Metaskills are higher-order skills that enable journalists to use their skills effectively. Metaskills – such as critical thinking – are what make the skills effective. Without metaskills, skills are like a hammer in the hands of a child. (Grow, n.d.)

We can identify our personal meta-skills by thinking about what we are passionate about in our careers. It is likely that these aspects of our work excite us because they correlate with our unique inner

competencies and personal competitive differentiators. Once we have identified this career sweet spot, we can think about which other knowledge areas would gel best with our natural meta-skills.

Our core business proposition

As soon as we begin a professional career or enter the business world, we enter a fight to establish our unique identities within the sea of available talent and commercial opportunity that comprises the modern business world.

The greatest success that we can have lies in the development of our unique business proposition. Once we find the optimum combination of inner strengths and hard skills that is uniquely us, opportunity will naturally coalesce around this true uniqueness. Diversification can provide us with the skills and experience that we need to realise our core business proposition.

> In many cases, the core business proposition which is most appropriate to your own tastes, preferences and personality will arise by a fairly natural process from within your own experience of participating in the business world.
>
> The point is demonstrated again and again by looking at the success stories of successful business people. For them, their core business strategy is not something which they devised from scratch by sitting at a desk and having a good think, but something which came to them as the result of their interaction with life. (James Essinger, 1999, p. 80)

Take away

To optimise our careers, it can be useful to acquire new skills that synergise with our base proficiencies.

Try the following:

1. Identify what you are passionate about.
2. Identify the meta-skills (personal strengths) that drive your success.
3. Determine new areas these meta-skills can be applied to.
4. Acquire hard skills in these new areas.
5. Create synergy between your old skillset and your new skillset.

In summary: Take a step back, reflect, then take a step forward.

Section III - Work

Some thoughts on optimising the emotional-functional interface in the modern informal workplace.

10. The internal company world

Employees' understanding of what their company is all about, is very different to the market's understanding of the business. This is often because employees have an idealistic view of their company, whereas the financial markets take a commercial view of the business enterprise.

An example of the market ideal, is the view that the only responsibility that a business has is to increase its profits.

> There is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud. (Wikipedia, Friedman doctrine, n.d.)

Although this is a healthy perspective as far as investors are concerned, thinking that the only goal of the company is to increase its profits, would very quickly demoralise the most enthusiastic company woman or man. Subsequently, employees have the need to believe in a higher purpose in their daily tasks, other than making money for the company's shareholders.

In response to this need for professional self-respect, companies create an internal world in which there is inherent pride in doing your job.

Management organises the company in a way that if everyone does their job well, then the company will be financially successful. Employees do not need to ponder over the financial significance of their work, however.

> Let me once again emphasize that instilling feelings of pride in your employees is an essential part of the environment that stimulates them to do their best.
>
> Pride in who I work for, or pride in my company, is the first and most important. It is having the feeling that where you work is a good place, that it makes a product that is good, and that it is one of the best, or the best in their industry. It is feeling good when you tell someone where you work.
>
> Pride in what I do is the feeling that my job, and especially how I do it, makes a difference… It is a feeling that you stand out in your profession. It is knowing that you are doing the best of the best. (Collins, 2011, p. 85)

Context for accomplishment

To create an internal company world where professional pride is insulated from the financial evaluation of the company's output, the following elements must be present:

- **Feeling of goodness**: Employees must have a good feeling about the products or services that they produce. In other words, employees must feel that the goods or services that the company produces are inherently good and desirable.

  If employees feel proud of the goods or services that they produce, then they will feel good about their share in making this result possible, without having to think about the financial evaluation of their productivity.

- **Professional pride**: Employees must feel proud that they are doing professional work which requires their unique skills,

talent and knowledge. If employees feel pride in their work, then they will gain a sense of professional self-respect, without having to think about the financial value of their skillset.

- **Recognition and respect**: If employees feel that their contribution to the company's success is recognised, this will motivate them to succeed, without having to view themselves as the cause of the company's profits.

Paradigm translation

It comes out that the market's perspective of employees' work is very different to the perspective of the employees who do the work.

The market evaluates employees' work from a commercial perspective, however employees assess the value of their work according to its inherent usefulness, the skill that was required to do the work and the accomplishment they perceive in having done the work.

In order to be successful, both of these perspectives must exist alongside each other. Companies must be aware of the need to respond to the market's commercial expectations, but also foster an internal work-environment of striving and fulfilment, in which employees can feel good about their accomplishments on their own merit.

For this to happen, the company's leadership must translate the commercial pressure on the company into internal dynamism, and also align the company's internal creativity with the commercial

expectations placed on the company.

> In 2004 Drucker said, "The CEO is the link between the Inside that is 'the organization,' and the Outside of society, economy, technology, markets, and customers…"
>
> My experience validates Drucker's observations, and my actions since those early days and weeks have been consistent with them… Over time I've come to see the power in Drucker's words about linking the outside to the inside…
>
> "The CEO is uniquely positioned to ensure that a company's purpose, values, and standards are relevant for the present and future and for the businesses the company is in. The CEO can and must make the interventions necessary to keep purpose and values focused on the outside. To sustain competitive advantage and growth, he or she must create standards to ensure that the company wins with those who matter most and against its very best competitors." (Lafley, 2009)

Take away

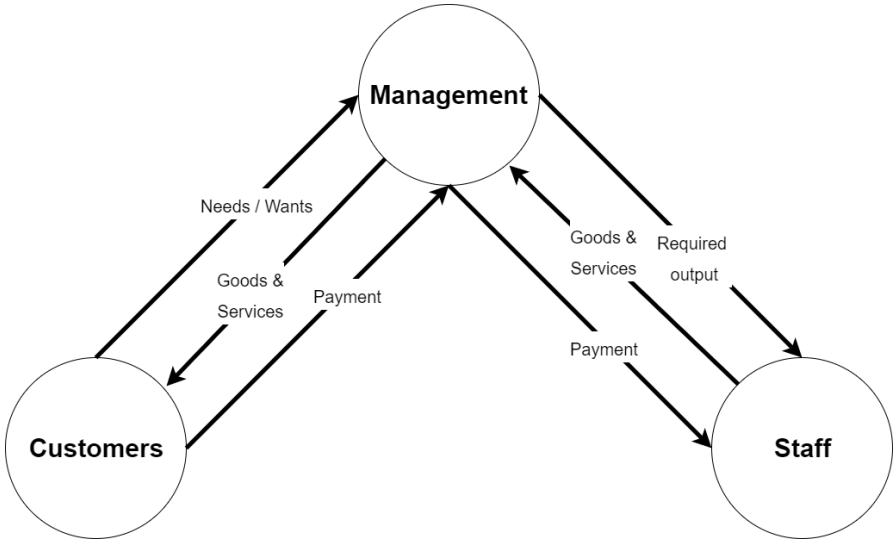
In order to create a healthy company operating environment the following ingredients are required:

- A self-contained world of striving and accomplishment.
- Robust business practices to ensure the company competes effectively and profitably.
- An interface that translates the external commercial pressure into internal enthusiasm, and the internal company energy into commercial results.

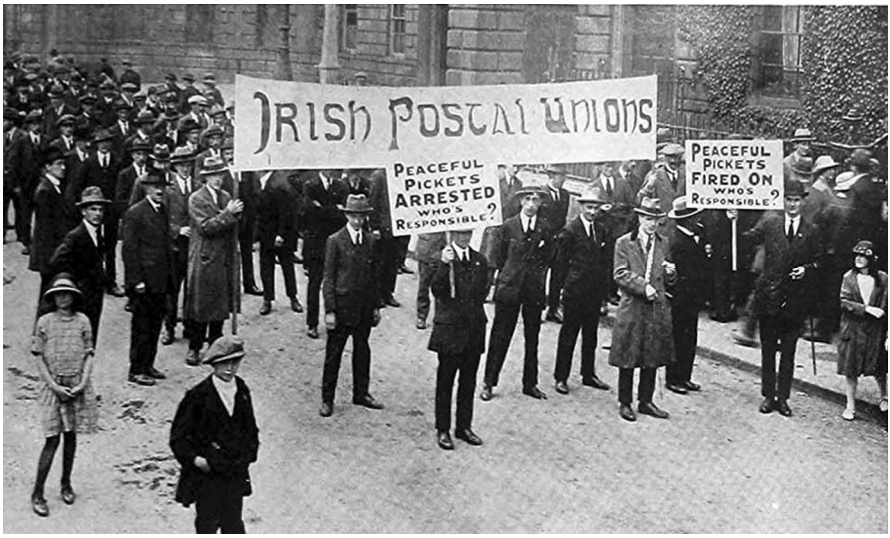
The company's leadership has to bridge between the internal company world and the external commercial world. This requires emotional involvement and inspired guidance within the company's internal world, combined with forthright and astute business acumen when selling the company and its products.

11. Perfecting informal organisations

From a purely financial perspective, the relationship between management and employees is the purchase by management of the goods and services that have been requested by customers, from the employees.



In traditional manufacturing companies, very little veneer covers the commerciality of this arrangement. There is no conviviality per-se between management and workers, and the financial interests of the employees may be represented by trade unions who negotiate on their behalf with management, sometimes with equanimity and sometimes
forcibly.

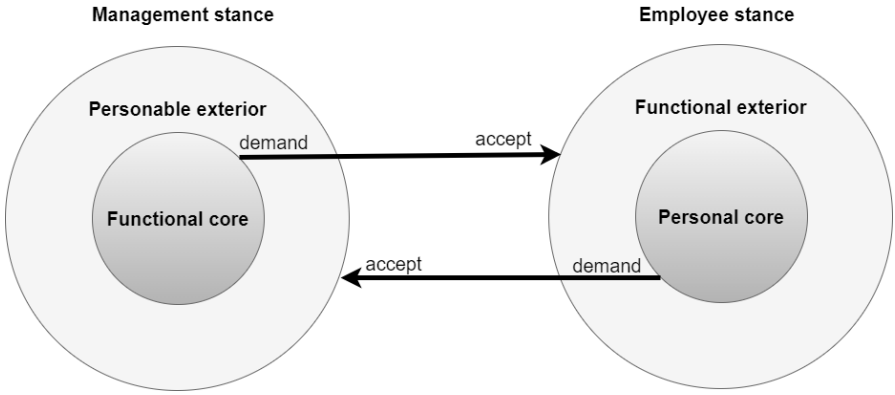


The Irish Postal Workers Strike, "The Graphic" newspaper 16 September 1922

However, since modern corporations seek to create their own internal society in which money is not seen to be the driving factor, the relationship between management and employees cannot be allowed to remain soul-less and impersonal.

Instead, a more nuanced understanding is fostered in which it is understood that management are "the people who have to get things done" and employees are "the people who need to feel at home while doing their tasks". The needs of management are functionally driven yet management remain "human", and the needs of the employees are socially driven but they still have to get the job done.

Subsequently, the quid pro quo for management's demand that employees "get the job done" is not financial, but is rather that management will accommodate the employees personal and social needs.



The greater the mutual understanding that develops between management and employees, the more they will work in harmony.

How can companies strive to achieve this happy state of affairs?

Enthusiasm

From the perspective of the ideal informal management – employee relationship, both management and employees are inherently in a state of conflict.

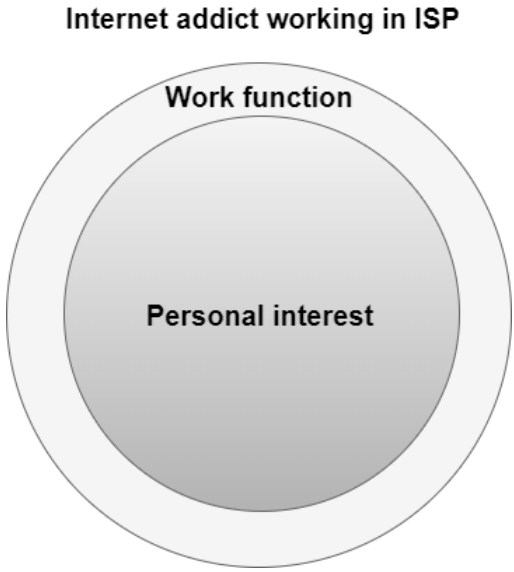
- Management wish to be as personable as possible to the employees, however they are constrained from being indiscriminately generous due to the need to demand the output of goods and services from their employees.
- Employees wish to provide management with the greatest output of goods and services possible, but they are constrained from working as hard as possible every day, due to their need to enjoy a good work-life balance.

However, the more employees enjoy their jobs, the smaller the discrepancy between the need to maximise employee output while simultaneously providing for their personal and social needs becomes. In other words, when employees perceive that their personal success and enjoyment lies in their work, they will not need management to goad them on to do their best.

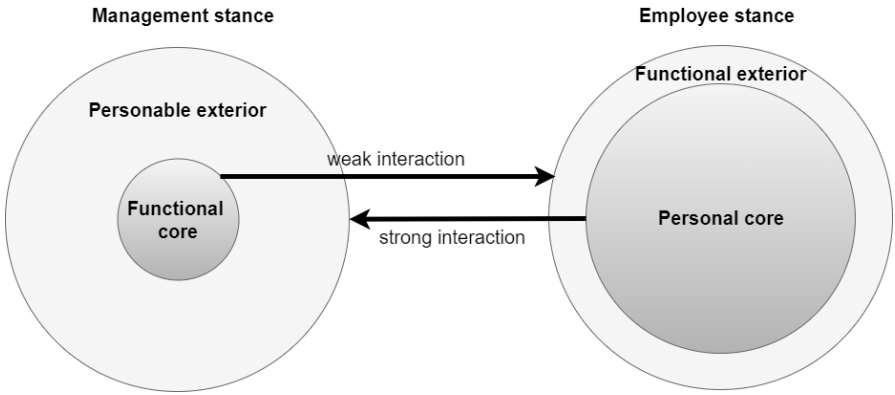
Quid pro quo

If the staff of an Internet Service Provider are wildly interested in networking connectivity and the Internet, it is likely that the ISP will be more successful than if staff fear the drudgery of yet another day of enabling customers to surf the web.

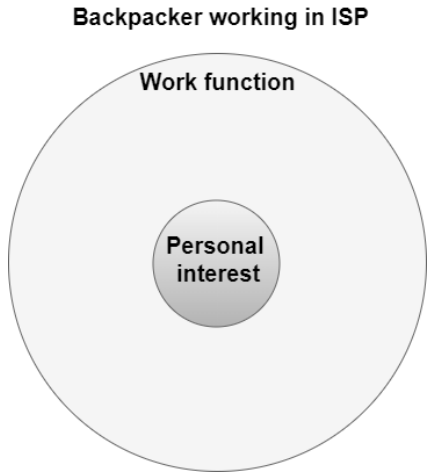
In the first scenario (staff are wildly enthusiastic about networking), there is very little "distance" between the functional exterior and the personal core of the ISP's employees.



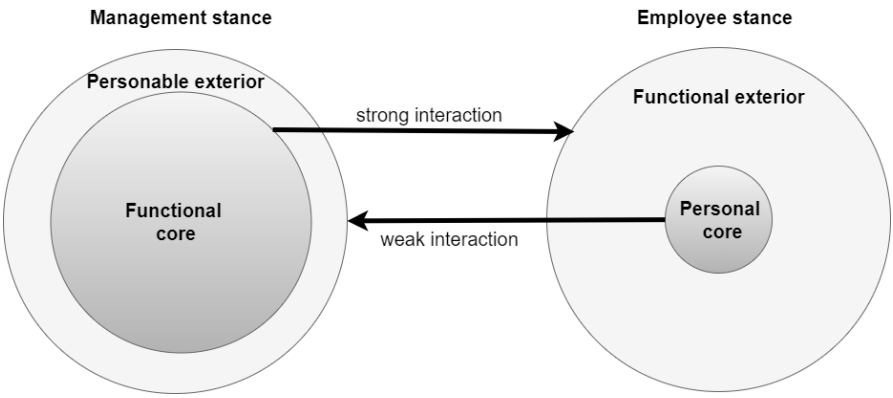
Because of this, there will be commensurately little requirement for management to make functional demands on their self-motivated ISP staff. Instead, they will enjoy a "warm" relationship with their employees, who will nevertheless "get the job done".



In the second scenario however (staff dread the drudgery of yet another day at work), there is a large gap between the employees' personal involvement in their work and the results they have to accomplish.



In this case, management will have to adopt a functional communication style when demanding that employees do their work. The relationship will be cold and factual.



Therefore, it seems that one of the major factors in the success of the informal company is the degree of personal interest that employees have in their own work.

> With the exception of two groups… all of the respondents ranked "interesting work" in one of the three top positions.
>
> Jurgensen, in a study that drew on a thirty-year practice in a large utility company of asking job applicants to rank-order job characteristics in terms of importance to the applicants, came up with a similar result. Over this period of time, job security declined in importance and "type of work" increased in importance.
>
> Furthermore, Jurgensen sorted the respondents out by groups according to educational attainment and found that higher

> educated persons attached more importance to type of work, while those with only high school diplomas attached more importance to job security.
>
> The author would argue that since our labor force contains a higher percentage of persons with post-secondary education each year, the increasing importance of interesting work is to be expected and will continue in the future.
>
> Making work interesting is not an easy task, however; it is much easier to pay more, to make work cleaner and safer, even to insure reasonable job security, than it is to make some kinds of work interesting. As stated previously, perhaps job enlargement and enrichment are ideas worth trying in the future on a far larger scale than has been done in the past. (Kovach, 1996, p. 29)

Take away

One of the most important things to look out for when employing new staff is whether the candidate is interested in their line of work and in the goods and services provided by the company.

Additionally, investing in employee training with a view to imparting to employees an insight into and appreciation of the work that they are doing, may be one of the most important investments a company can make.

12. The good-natured company

Once upon a time, people used to go to work in the morning and come back home from work in the evening. Once a week or once a month, they would pick up a pay-cheque that enabled them to provide their families with shelter, food, clothing and some small luxuries now and again.

Work was not much fun, but people put up with that because it was understood that the payoff for working, being the ability to provide for your family, was more than ample compensation for the vicissitudes of working life.

Quality of living, meaningfulness and leadership were provided by family life, the village social scene, religious institutions and patriotism. People did not "live for work", but rather "going to work" was a necessity that was endured to provide for "the important things in life".

> …going to work meant: A better way of living—bills paid. We (will) not worry about that heat being cut off, that electric being cut off. My son not wearing dogged-out shoes where his feet almost touching the ground. They can get that bigger coat because the coat they wearing is too tight. (Greg J. Duncan, 2002, p. 136)



Girls working in Box Factory, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

Post-modern utopia

The post-modern era has challenged this idea of "what life is all about", and believes that "work" should be at least as much fun as anything else we do.

In order to accomplish this new state of affairs, corporations spend much time and effort in creating a submersive organisational culture that gives employees a sense of belonging. The work scene becomes the place where employees feel at home and where they can become part of the societal fabric.



Employees choosing colleagues' photos

Within this socialised work environment, employees may begin to feel that the company that they work for comprises part of their social identity.

> Belonging is the initial stage. You're excited about starting work. There's a novelty in having your new desk and work station (where company policy permits). You've had your induction, so you now know the building layout, the company's mission statement and what your pension rights are when you retire.
>
> You've got some work to do so that you feel you're adding something to the company — but you aren't threatened by your work demands. You feel comfortable — you belong. (Sangster, 2017, p. 72)

Commercial reality

In reality, however, the reason that corporations invest valuable resources in order to create an internal society is purely to ensure the continued financial welfare of the corporation. By making employees "feel at home" at work, companies reduce staff turnover and increase discretionary staff effort.

In other words, although being emotionally molly-coddled at work may seem desirable, it is only financial imperative that motivates the creation of a warm and self-contained corporate society.

Subsequently, if a financial imperative requires decisions to be made that cut through the corporate inner-society, the financial imperative will always win over employees' indignation.

> First, you must understand that organisational culture—the system of shared values, beliefs, and norms—is the product of the interaction among the selection process; the managerial functions; the organisation's behaviour, structure, and process…
>
> Employees who are not well matched with or suited to the organisational culture will exit, voluntarily or involuntarily. Deviants are often isolated or ostracised; they are cut off from communications, are not involved in rituals, and may be simply ignored. In some cases, deviants may be asked to leave or to resign. The deviant can be identified by examining effectiveness measures. (Jain, 2005, p. 278)

Since financial drivers provide the underpinnings of the corporate society, decisions within the society will always reflect commercial reasoning first, and inter-personal reasoning second.

It seems then, that we are caught in a quandary concerning how we

will relate to the societal environment at work.

- On the one hand, we want to be "part of things" at work.
- On the other hand, it would be unwise for us to integrate our deepest hopes and wishes into the work scene, given that the warmth within this society is only sustained due to monetary considerations.

How can we be happily involved in the excitement and buzz of the office life, but nevertheless insulate ourselves from being hurt when our personal interests collide with the commercial foundation of this manufactured world?

Who owns goodwill?

The fact that a group of people who work together in a company have common concerns, interests and goals is undeniably true. They have to get the job done, and will meet adversity and challenges along the way, which they overcome together.

Friends are formed in such an environment, as trust and goodwill build up between the members of the group. However, this friendship is not owned by the company in which the team operates, rather it is a discretionary relationship that is entered into by the team members.

In other words, the company may spend money on creating an environment in which positive relationships can flourish, but the goodwill itself remains the “private property” of the employees.

Hayek acknowledges that the corporation may be identified with the interests of its employees. *This would mean that the group of employees could be viewed as a collective with its own personality*. Employees pursue a common goal and they share collective experiences, thereby creating a collective with similar traits.

For Hayek, however, *it is not acceptable to identify the corporation with this collective*. This would amount to interfering with freedom and, in turn, the efficient use of the means of production. Here he is referring, for example, to the freedom of employees to leave and find a new job… He writes:

"In a free system (i.e. in a system of free labor) it is necessary in the interest of the efficient use of resources that the corporation be regarded primarily as an aggregate of material assets.

It is they, and not the men, whom the management can at will allocate to different purposes, they which alone are the means which it is the task of the corporation to put to the best use, while the individual must in the last resort himself remain free to decide whether the best use of his energies is within the particular corporation or elsewhere." (Muel Kaptein, 2002, p. 111)

If the company views the goodwill that exists among its employees as a company asset, this can lead to management using this collective feeling of belonging as a negotiating tool, and ultimately force employees into assuming a position that is not in their best financial interests.

Take away

When people work together, they form friendships and long lasting

relationships. This goodwill remains the private property of company employees, and does not belong to the company for which they work, however.

It is important to differentiate between the company's will to create a positive internal mini-society, and the right of employees to lead their own personal lives. If this differentiation is not made, it can lead to a loss of believability in the true good nature of the working environment.

13. Complacency and competition

Traditionally, corporations, even very powerful ones, do not last longer than one or two hundred years. For example, the Dutch East India Company that for a while was more powerful than some European governments, was founded in 1602 and became bankrupt in the late 1700's.

As the BBC pointed out in 2012

> The past few years have seen previously unthinkable corporate behemoths – from financial firms such as Lehman Brothers to iconic car manufacturers such as Saab – felled by economic turmoil or by unforgiving customers and tough rivals. (Gittleson, 2012)

Is there a fundamental reason that corporations cannot last forever, or will we see a future that contains 1000 year old Microsoft's and Apple's that are indelibly entrenched in the world's economy and work-style?

Self-contained universe

The larger and more successful a company is, the more likely it is to develop its own way of thinking, its own way of doing things and its own internal world of values and emotions.

> …individual companies have their own respective corporate culture and values, and at the same time each company also has its own view of leadership, which is influenced by different organizational contexts embedded within the company.

> The sharing of organizational culture and values gives rise to unique corporate systems, rules, and customs, and establishes the company's own way of thinking and ways of viewing things in general, as well as [inducing] thought and behavior patterns… into employees. (Kodama, 2017, p. 83)

By developing its own way of doing things, it is possible for a company to gain predictability and to enhance process quality. By developing its own culture and inner emotional environment, it is possible for a company to get employee buy-in, increase employee longevity and become known as a good place to work.

There is danger, however, in a company developing its own inner world of values and emotions. The happy self-contained corporate world may eventually become self-justifying and so lose touch with the external market reality. If this happens, the company can become uncompetitive, unresponsive to changing market conditions, and lose market share.

Is there a way to ensure that the internal corporate world will be used as a position of strength from which to respond to market challenges, rather than as an easy refuge from a market that relentlessly demands change and improvement?

Expecting the unexpected

Generally speaking, people want to hear things that will make them happy and not things that they may find upsetting.

For example, if someone thinks that they have their life worked out, the last thing they want you to tell them is something that challenges their plans. If you do tell them something that poses a challenge to their life plan, they may ignore you or forcibly reject your ideas. Having a clear life-plan gives people a feeling of safe predictability; demonstrating that this plan is impractical can make them feel threatened and anxious.

Similarly, when a company builds a cosy self-contained working environment, employees develop a feeling of security and predictability that is based on the ongoing viability of the corporate business plan. Subsequently, executives can become resistant to hearing anything that could cause them to have to rethink the business plan that forms the basis for the work environment in which they live, because this would make them feel anxious and worried.

A classic case of such short-sightedness was Kodak's reluctance to recognise the imminent demise of photographic film, until it was too late.

> In 1975, Kodak engineer Steve Sasson invented the world's first digital camera… After taking your photos with the camera, you could … display the images on a standard TV. He and his colleagues demonstrated this "filmless technology" to Kodak executives throughout 1976.
>
> But Kodak had a blind spot when it came to anything that might disrupt the company's profitable film business. Sasson reports the executive reaction: "Why would anyone want to view his or her pictures on a TV? How would you store these images? What does an electronic photo album look like? When would this type of approach be available to the consumer?"

> Sasson and his team did not have the answers. But by applying Moore's law, the team came up with an estimate: In 15 to 20 years, the devices would be available to consumers…In January 2012, Kodak filed for bankruptcy.
>
> When a company is large and successful, its size can be its worst enemy, especially when it is so dominant that it lacks serious competition. A company culture that drove success in the early days can become overly codified, rigid and ritualistic… Slowly, great companies can lose touch with reality. (Dave Gray, 2014, p. 46)

The Kodak executives did not want to hear about digital photography because this challenged the cosy world they lived in, within the world's top photographic film company.



Kodak Camera Center, Tennessee, ca. 1930-1945

Internal competition

One way in which the company's internal comfort zone can be transformed into a source of innovation and progress, is to cultivate an atmosphere of friendly competition. Rewarding employees and teams that provide originality and direction, can allow a company to generate the internal momentum that is needed to drive the business forward.

> Tjosvold et al. (2003) focused on interpersonal competition, and identified the factors influencing the constructiveness of competition within organizations, using a questionnaire survey of managers and employees in Chinese firms. They found that the constructive competition is promoted by the importance of winning, the fairness of the rules and criteria for winning, perceiving oneself as having a competitive advantage, a positive relationship among competitors, and a history of confirming each other' s competence.
>
> All these studies assume that intemal competition motivates organizational members to set higher goals, and change the status quo within a firm.
>
> They also suggest that we need to consider the fit between competitive climate and member's personality (Brown et al., 1998), the type of competition (Tsai, 2002; Tjosvold et al,. 2003), and the relationship among competitors (Tjosvold et al., 2003) in order to generate a constructive competition within a firm. (Matsuo, 2005, p. 50)

Competitions have to be carefully designed however, in order to maintain a collegial spirit of good sportsmanship.

Take away

The ability to create a self-contained emotional environment can be a source of strength for companies, as this allows for a repository of employee positivity and supports a pleasant working environment.

However, in today's challenging market environment that demands continual growth and newness, this comfortable inner world cannot be allowed to stultify the ability to grow from challenge.

Having a general attitude of alertness and of being ready to meet life head on, can prime management and employees to surf the waves of change, even as they enjoy the corporate security that has been provided for them.

14. Knowledge creation strategy

When devising a strategy for the future growth of a firm, it is first necessary to decide how to view the current state of the firm. The Theory of the Firm provides various perspectives from which the current state of a firm can be analysed.

For example, the Product Based View of the Firm states that the products that a company produces are its primary differentiator. In this case, strategy consists of dominating specific product markets.

> The strategic objective in the PBV (product based view) is to dominate in a product or service market. Firms are able to dominate when they have the best understanding of the industry, particularly the opportunities and threats that are emerging.
>
> … The PBV (product based view) of strategy asks what it is that the firm must do to dominate in its selected industry. Pursuit of these answers is expected to generate the most desirable internal configuration. (Phillips, 2007, p. 110)

On the other hand, the Resource Based View of the Firm states that a firm's capabilities are its primary differentiator. Therefore, strategy consists of applying the firm's capabilities in the most effective manner possible.

> Resource based theory sees the firm as a collection of assets, or capabilities… The success of corporations is based on those of their capabilities that are distinctive…
>
> Business strategy involves identifying a firm's capabilities: putting together a collection of complementary assets and capabilities, and maximising and defending the economic rents which result… (Korn, 2013)

Knowledge Based View of the Firm

The Knowledge Based View of the Firm (KBV) is a specialisation of the Resource Based View, which posits that the primary competitive advantage of a company lies in its knowledge. This perspective is particularly relevant to companies that rely predominantly on human capital and expertise, such as financial services and high-tech companies.

The knowledge-based view of the firm argues that the products and services produced by tangible resources depend on how they are combined and applied, which is a function of the firm's know-how.

This knowledge is embedded in and carried through individual employees as well as entities such as organization culture and identity, routines, policies, systems, and documents.

> The knowledge-based view of the firm posits that these knowledge assets may produce long-term sustainable competitive advantage for the organization because knowledge-based resources are socially complex to understand and difficult to imitate by another organization (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). (Gottschalk, 2005, p. 55)

However, assuming that knowledge is the primary differentiator of a company can make it difficult to identify a future growth strategy. There does not seem to be any way to guarantee the invention of commercially useful knowledge within a company and there is nothing to prevent a small company from making a crucial discovery.

In other words, how can a company position itself to be the repository of knowledge that does not yet exist?

Due to this problem, some researchers have concluded that it is not possible to create a strategic growth plan that is based specifically on the Knowledge Based View of the Firm.

> Given the current theoretical perspectives on knowledge, KBV (knowledge based value) is not yet a theory of strategy (i.e., a theory that links independent variables to a specific conception of firm performance) that goes beyond the insights provided by the resource-based view and the related dynamic capabilities approach.
>
> …Similarly, the empirical literature suggests that it is unlikely that we have a new theory of organization, given that internal and external knowledge transfer processes are not appreciably different (i.e. there is no way of localising knowledge creation within the firm). (Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, 2000)

Hence the question arises, is it possible to determine a company structure that is optimised for the creation and application of new knowledge?

The following are some ideas for encouraging creativity and retaining inventive talent.

Driving knowledge creation

- **Emotional complexity**: Due to the need for social crystallisation and operational predictability, corporations often encourage an emotionally simple and homogenous environment.

> Corporate homogeneity – All business verticals and functional components can achieve a homogeneous ambition and approach if their aspirations and perceptions are well guided. A vision document provides the required homogeneity.
>
> All stakeholders can perform with better zeal if they connect to a common purpose provided by the organization's vision. (Jakhotiya, 2016, p. 8)

However, predictability is the antithesis of innovation. People with a predictable work-habit are likely to think predictably as well.

The passion of intellectual accomplishment can only be cultured in an emotionally complex environment that does not scale down diversity, variety and expressiveness.

> Creation lies at the edge between order and chaos. Requisite variety helps a knowledge-creating organisation to maintain the balance between order and chaos.
>
> An organisation's internal diversity has to match the variety and complexity of the environment in order to deal with challenges posed by that environment. (Ikujiro Nonaka, 2000, p. 28)

- **Intellectual excitement**: One of the pre-requisites for the creation of new knowledge is an environment of intellectual excitement that incorporates mind, body and spirit.

  In order to create this type of environment, it may be necessary for a company to fund learning activities that do not have a direct measurable output.

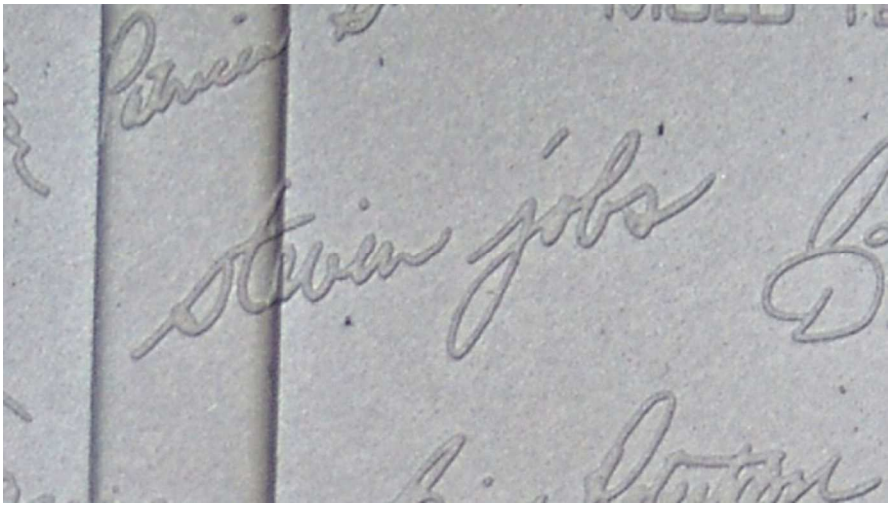
> Knowledge is created in the spiral that goes through two seemingly antithetical concepts such as order and chaos, micro and macro, part and whole, mind and body, tacit and explicit, self and other, deduction and induction, and creativity and control. (Ikujiro Nonaka, 2000)

- **Knowledge-outcome ownership**: Allowing employees to feel ownership of the outcome of their knowledge and work, is one of the best ways to encourage them to find new and better ways of working.

> The Mac team had a complicated set of motivations, but the most unique ingredient was a strong dose of artistic values. First and foremost, Steve Jobs thought of himself as an artist, and he encouraged the design team to think of ourselves that way, too. The goal was never to beat the competition, or to make a lot of money; it was to do the greatest thing possible, or even a little greater…
>
> Since the Macintosh team were artists, it was only appropriate that we sign our work. Steve came up with the awesome idea of having each team member's signature engraved on the hard tool that molded the plastic case, so our signatures would appear inside the case of every Mac that rolled off the production line…
>
> We held a special signing party after one of our weekly meetings on February 10, 1982. Jerry Mannock, the manager of the industrial design team, spread out a large piece of drafting paper on the table to capture our signatures. Steve gave a little speech

about artists signing their work, and then cake and champagne were served as he called each team member to step forward and sign their name for posterity…

Steve waited until last, when he picked a spot near the upper centre and signed his name with a flourish. (Hertzfeld, 1982)



Steve Jobs signature inside original Macintosh case

- **Societal improvement**: The "I did something really great" feeling, can only be experienced if employees realise that they are doing something that is genuinely useful for society.

  It was no use appealing to the 'organization' to produce new products in a miracle time. Everything had to be done on a person-to-person basis and cutting across all the lines of red-tape… I summarize the qualifications for this sort of operation:

> 1. Money capitalism has to give way to motives of human capitalism both as to public sentiment (‘fighting for our lives’) or the breaking of red tape (‘You can do the paper work later’). It is a sense of vital urgency.
>
> 2. One has to work with back-room boys who are both self-starters and ingenious and who enjoy the sense of vital urgency. For once, the back-room boys feel they are doing something useful. (Foster, 2016, p. 143)

Take away

Creative minds are attracted to interesting environments, compulsory homogeneity is a warning sign that ingenuity and originality are on their way out.

Additionally, a true learning environment can only be led by someone who relishes the personal growth of constant learning themselves.

15. Interdisciplinarity, risk and opportunity

The development of new products and services to bring to the marketplace can be driven by scientific advances such as the development of antibiotics, plastics and microchips. However sometimes new and exciting market offerings can be created by bringing together existing technologies and skills sets.

The ability to successfully combine existing knowledge and skills in different areas is referred to as interdisciplinarity.

> Interdisciplinarity involves the combining of two or more academic disciplines into one activity (e.g., a research project). It is about creating something new by crossing boundaries, and thinking across them. (Wikipedia, Interdisciplinarity, n.d.)

For example, a company may already possess the component parts of the knowledge required to make a quantum leap forward, however these bits of knowledge are held in siloed areas.

To find new opportunities, the specialised knowledge in different departments must be combined and made to work together.

> A major route left for economies to stay innovative is better coordination among knowledge communities aimed at sparking synergy creation… For individual firms, this means management's ability to combine knowledge of individual technologies and consolidate corporate-wide technologies and skills within their organisations. (Robert A Huggins, 2007, p. 27)

Personal interdisciplinarity

Personal success may also rely on the individual's ability to combine knowledge and skills in different areas.

For example, Leonardo Da Vinci combined scientific knowledge in different areas to advance mankind's understanding of the body.

> Leonardo's notebooks clearly reveal his fascination with human development… He studied the anatomical composition of muscles and bones… To complete his work in this area, he described human movement as a mechanical system of interlocking parts, claiming his place as one of the first to conceptualize this idea. His notes in this field demonstrate the amazing combination of engineering and medical knowledge Leonardo possessed. (David & Charles, 2012, p. 34)

Steve Jobs combined his deep understanding of humanities and the sciences to produce technically brilliant and attractive consumer electronics.

> "I always thought of myself as a humanities person as a kid, but I liked electronics," Jobs told me on the day he decided to cooperate on a biography. "Then I read something that one of my heroes, Edwin Land of Polaroid, said about the importance of people who could stand at the intersection of humanities and sciences, and I decided that's what I wanted to do."
>
> It was as if he was describing the theme of his life, and the more I studied him, the more I realized that this was, indeed, the essence of his tale. (Isaacson, 2012)

Both at the corporate and at the individual level, opportunity is created when different disciplines are combined to create a multi-

faceted result that satisfies difficult-to-reconcile requirements.

Risk and reward

Since opportunity presents itself at the intersection of discipline specific knowledge areas, it would appear that the more disparate the knowledge areas are, the more likely it is that their successful combination will result in a breakthrough.

On the other hand, the more disparate the disciplines are that must be combined to solve a problem, the harder it will be to develop the knowledge in each discipline to a level that will enable convergence of these knowledge areas, therefore the less likely the chances are of success.

> The delivery of fusion electricity is not just about understanding plasma. You also have to know the materials you're going to build the reactor out of. You then need to know how to build the reactor and put all the pieces together. You have to be able to maintain it and it's really important that you factor this in right at the start. It is absolutely vital that you do all this in an integrated way.
>
> You can't just say that we're going to make something 10 times hotter than the Sun and it will work. You have to think about the integrated solution. (Smith, 2016)

We can therefore identify a correlation between risk and opportunity in interdisciplinary ventures

- If there is a great disparity between the required knowledge areas, then the venture may have great potential but will also have a high risk of failure due to the difficulty involved

in overcoming the incompatibilities between the knowledge domains.

- On the other hand, if the disparate knowledge areas easily exhibit homogeneity, then the risk of not being able to get to the required result is small, but the outcome of combining the knowledge domains will be less significant and will have a lower return.

Take away

Both individuals and companies can experience a quantum leap in personal success by identifying new knowledge areas that arc with our foundational knowledge base. Through this, we can invent products and services that represent the intermingling of different fields of knowledge.

Conversely, it may be possible to use the disparity of the knowledge domains that have been combined in a new invention, as an indicator of commercial potential.

16. Epilogue

The relationship between employees and the companies for which they work, is as complex as life itself. People are social beings and like to be part of the crowd, but also have a need to preserve their unique individuality and quiet personal life.

> We want to belong. We want to be a part of the many, but only if we are ourselves. We do not want to fade and cease to exist as we meld with the crowd. Our tools are about individualization and personalization, but we individualize so we are a (unique) part of the crowd. (Siemens, 2006, p. 106)

Finding harmony between being part of the work social scene and achieving success in your personal life requires self-awareness, common sense and an appreciation of all that life has to offer.

17. Request from the author

I hope that you enjoyed reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it.

If you did, can I please ask you to review this book on Amazon (http://www.amazon.com/dp/0648213102).

By doing this, you will enable me to invest more time in reflecting on and writing about life's challenges, opportunities and surprises.

Thank you,

Edward Chalk

fleetingswallow@gmail.com

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