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IMPACT

INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
AND CREATIVE THINKING

A JOURNAL FOR MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

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our Freedom fighters!



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INDEPENDENCE
DAY

AUGUST 15th

Greetings from **IMPACT**



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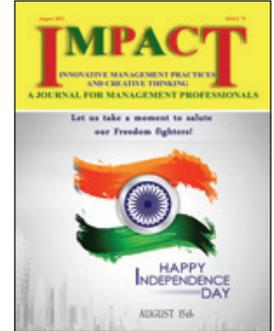
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Dear Readers,

India celebrates another Independence Day. So many of great men and women of this great mother land have fought against the British and got us this Independence for us.

How many of us realize? How many of the younger generation are aware of the struggle our previous generations have gone through?

Are we really enjoying the fruits?

Think.

Editorial Team

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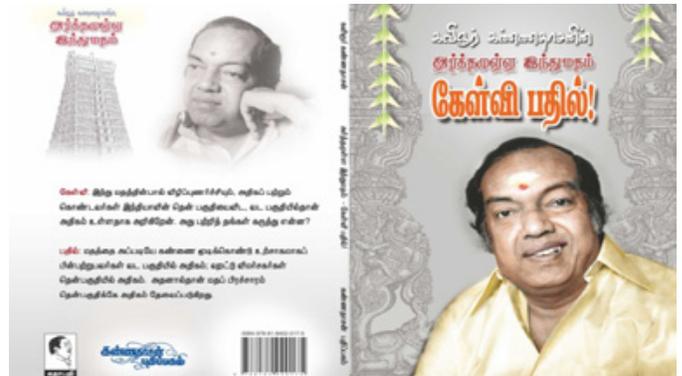


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The Power of Intuition in the VUCA Business World

Philip Tetlock (the author of ‘Super-Forecasting – The Art of Science of Prediction’) asks certain pertinent questions in the present context of the VUCA world:

- Can we forecast the future?
- How accurate are experts? Are they better than algorithms?
- Who are the best forecasters? What are the qualities of the best?
- We believe experts, but have no data.

Does it mean are we at the end of the ROAD?...or TUNNEL?...Yes. There are so much in us really to be OPTIMISTIC!

“Intuition is a very powerful thing, more powerful than intellect”. - Steve Jobs

Introduction

“Compared with what we ought to be, we are only half-awake...We are making use of only a small part of our possible mental resources.” ~ William James, founder of Psychology (1911)

Why Intuition?

“Intuition is imperative because conscious reasoning and logic are too limited for human-created problems, particularly those on the global scale.” - Daniel Cappon, ‘Intuition & Management’



What is Intuition?

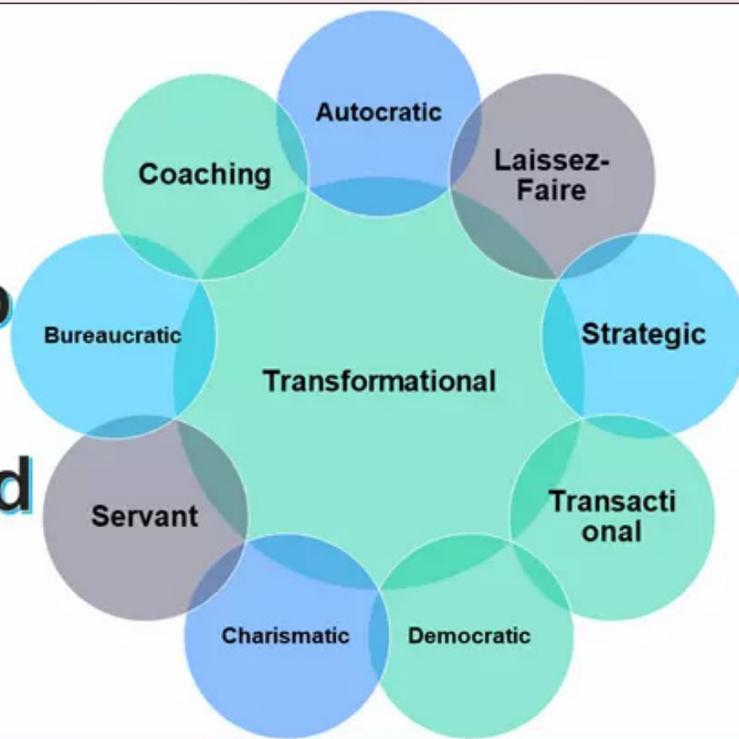
Intuition is unexplained feelings you have that something is true even when you have no evidence or proof of it. (Collins Dictionary).

Intuition is the ability to acquire knowledge without proof, evidence, or conscious reasoning, or without understanding how the knowledge was acquired. Intuition is your direct perception of the absolute truth. In other words, it's the wisdom in you that knows everything without having to learn it first. Intuition “is a form of unconscious intelligence that is as needed as conscious intelligence.”

Role of Intuition in decision-making

Intuitive decision-making comes into play when we experience what's known as a “gut feeling”—one that often runs contrary to what logic might suggest. Instead of recognizing and integrating these intuitive flashes into the decision-making process, however, we often dismiss them as an “emotional response” and deem them immaterial. In doing so, we limit the scope of relevant information we bring to bear as we make choices.

10 Best Leadership Styles in VUCA World



The automatic information processing that underlies intuition called “highway hypnosis“ can be experienced daily. You drive for miles without a conscious thought about driving the car. Pedestrians walking down a street lost in thought without awareness of the processes that got them there. It operates also in complex decision-making—often enough, without due credit. People typically cite rational-sounding criteria for their actions and do not disclose the subjective preferences of feelings that arise spontaneously.

Role of Intuition during Uncertainty

Modern research shows that most of our decisions are made with a mix of emotional and intellectual insights. We tend to rationalize the emotional aspects later on, and ignore an overwhelming number of biases that also lead us to conclusions. “Management is the art of making decisions with insufficient information”. You are expected to decide bigger issues. Success comes from distinctiveness rather than accuracy, e.g., macroeconomics forecasts. Intuition plays an essential role for decision-making in rapidly

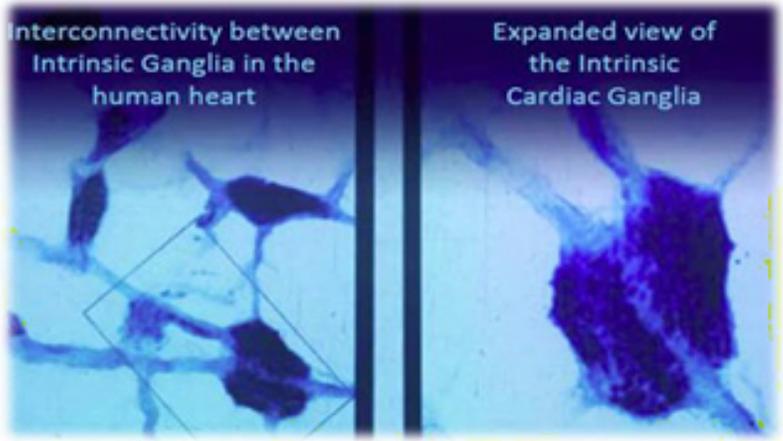
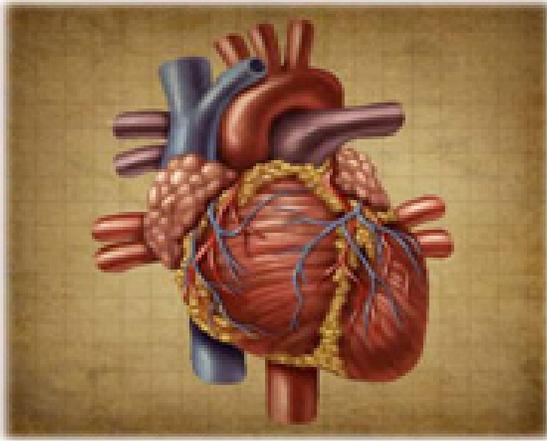
changing environments; if there are contradictions in the data; ambiguity due to lack of data; or decisions that centre on people (hiring, firing, or political decisions). ... It is the combination of cognition and intuition that is powerful.

Influence on normal life

Typical examples where intuition can play an important role in making decisions are: Choosing your life partner, selecting the right car to buy, evaluation of a job, decision about an education, selecting a meal when eating out, selecting the next book to read, decide how to dress for today, and so on.

In Business Environment

As an entrepreneur, one of the most important habits to cultivate is trust -- not trust in others (however, that’s important too), but trust in yourself. How many times have we missed an opportunity because we listened to the advice of others rather than trusting a gut feeling that we had? It happens to the best of us, but in order to



truly be successful, we have to learn how to trust ourselves and follow our hearts. All too often we're advised to "look at the facts" and "weigh all the options," when sometimes the answers we're searching for come from within. Even as children, we're told things such as "adults are always right." We're trained to listen to what we're told, not make our own judgments and ultimately, not to follow our intuition.

If we would like to debate on 'Is there difference between skilfully using your intuition and impulsively reacting to a situation?' The answer is: Yes, there is a decisive difference.

To understand this difference, let's examine the question of the impulsive reaction. We each have unique software programs running on our brains. These programs are designed to keep our system running efficiently and accurately. The specific programming of our software is the compilation of our lifetime of experiences and our genetics. The software is designed to run in the background, helping us to make decisions quickly and without the need for intervention. We'll call this the default response. Something happens and our system responds automatically. No discussion. No problem. We have all experienced situations where our default software makes decisions that wind up being sub-optimal or even counterproductive. Not only that, but this happens time and time again, even when the situation is essentially identical to previous system failures.

Now consider the notion of intuition. Over the years, we have worked with many senior executives and found that most put a high value on their intuitive ability. This is probably no surprise, because intuition is widely accepted as a success trait of senior leaders. This may sound a lot like the default response. But, there is a significant difference, however. Intuition relies on a source of reasoning other than your head. Intuition draws upon your heart or your gut for input. You see, intuition doesn't mean without input. Rather it means a non-traditional type of input. To access this level of processing, you must first interrupt the default software that is running on your brain. On such occasions, we must first stop the default response through use of an active pause.

It is better creating a ritualized technique, such as a deep breath, followed by a countdown from 5 down to 1. Once we've successfully disrupted the default programming, we can check in with our other sources of intelligence...our heart and our gut. Based on input from these, we can exercise our intuitive decision-making.

A Pattern in Patterns

Nobel laureate Herbert A. Simon, a professor of psychology and computer science at Carnegie Mellon University, has studied human decision making for decades and has come to the conclusion that experience enables people to chunk information so that they can store and retrieve it easily. In chess,

for instance, Simon found that grand masters are able to recognize and recall perhaps 50,000 significant patterns (give or take a factor of two) of the astronomical number of ways in which the various pieces can be arranged on a board. Associated with that knowledge is important information, such as possible offensive and defensive manoeuvres that each cluster of pieces might suggest. “Experts see patterns that elicit from memory the things they know about such situations,” says Simon.

How to Discipline Intuition

We should not let ourselves believe whatever comes to our mind. To be useful, our beliefs should be constrained by the logic of probability. Base rates matter, even in the presence of evidence about the case at hand. Intuitive impressions of the diagnosis of evidence are often exaggerated. It becomes necessary to anchor our judgment of the probability of an outcome on a plausible base rate and also question the diagnosticity of our evidence.

How to Develop Your Intuition

Intuition exists for all of us, but some people are better than others at accessing the information it

provides. One of the studies recommends 3 tips to help you recognize the signals:

1. Pay attention to physical cues.

We often have a physical reaction to decision-making, so when considering your options, pay attention to those responses. The adage “listen to your gut” has scientific validity, because there are neurotransmitters in your gut that help to maintain homeostasis within your body. Is that feeling in your stomach nausea or nervous excitement?

2. Document your flashes.

Intuition may come to us in small “aha” moments as we’re weighing alternatives. These flashes of insight may suggest resources that are not immediately evident but will support a less likely alternative and increase its chance of success.

3. Take the time to listen.

Repress the urge to ignore a feeling you have about the decision you’re making and evaluate the foundation of your impression. Sometimes we mistake fear or

			
VOLATILITY	UNCERTAINTY	COMPLEXITY	AMBIGUITY
The challenge is unexpected or unstable and may be of unknown duration, but it's not necessarily hard to understand; knowledge about is often available.	Despite a lack of other information, the event's basic cause and effect are known. Change is possible but not a given.	The situation has many interconnected parts and variables. Some information is available or can be predicted, but the volume or nature of it can be overwhelming to process.	Casual relationships are completely unclear. No precedents exist; you face “unknown unknowns.”

apprehension for intuition, but sometimes, those feelings are rooted in the real, quantifiable evidence of past experiences. Put aside that part of your ego (or the ridicule you might face from others) to examine what intuition is telling you.

OR, another study says you may adopt: Quick Heart Coherence Meditation

1. Take a deep few diaphragm breath
2. Close your eyes and imagine you breathe through your heart
3. Recall a positive memory of love or deep gratitude
4. Breathe through heart & feel the love and gratitude in your body

Recent Study on Intuitive Decision Making

Daniel Kahneman (a notable Israeli psychologist and economist) theorizes that our brain utilizes two complementary systems to support our decision making:

He classifies systems as System #1: EFFORTLESS walk / Intuition / Impulse / Skilled response / Easy; and System #2: EFFORTFUL run / Reason / Intention / Doubt / Concentration. His studies have shown that “Our thoughts and actions are routinely guided by System 1 and generally are on the mark. The problem looks easy, so system #1 processes it automatically. Our DEFAULT USE of effortless system #1 causes us to make mistakes OFTEN.

Often business decisions are made based on previous experiences, “business as usual,” or staying in your comfort zone instead of synthesizing new and existing data and insights. The challenge then is: How can executives decipher the meaningful information from the clutter? How can they ensure that they make an impact for their business against the flush of information washing over them? How can they become catalysts of change?

The popular answer often is to improve the analytical skills and tools of your team. But the true challenge is for executives to manage their team in an increasingly analytical business environment and to improve their ability to quickly extract, compile, and synthesize pieces of imperfect information to make smarter decisions.

Modern Neuro-cardiology

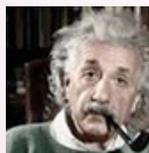
In addition to the above, recent experiments have interestingly shown Heart as a sensing organ and Brains are not the rhythmic controller of bodily functions, the Heart is. Brain sends c. 40-60 times as much data to the heart as is reverse. Heart tunes feelings, reactions, perceptions and physiological feedback. Heart has its own intrinsic memory – independent of the brains’.

“And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.” ~ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry~

Conclusion

Intuition is based on our daily decision and it is always right; follow your gut and never regret your intuition, because it always and will ever be your second you, in the way of taking decision.

Decision-making isn’t an either/or situation; you can—and should—use both logic and intuition when making choices. These things aren’t opposites, they’re simply two sides of the same coin. Recognizing the value of both allows you access to the broadest spectrum of information and helps you make the best decision.



The Only real Valuable Thing is Intuition” - Albert Einstein

Prepared by: S.Jeyachandran, Ph.D.,

Nehru – Patel – Tandon Controversy In 1950

I was closely associated with Rajaji, especially during his last days.

I wish to highlight an unfortunate episode which I came to know from Rajaji. This is about the misunderstanding between Pandit Nehru & Sardar Patel, a few months before the latter became immortal.

Rajaji demitted his office as the Governor General and Babu Rajendra Prasad became the President of India on 26th Jan 1950. Within six months, the Congress Party decided to have its Presidential election. The process started by the beginning of August.

Purushotham Das Tandon of U.P filed his nomination for the Presidentship without the concurrence/blessings of Pandit Nehru, who was not for Tandon for three reasons. 1) Purushotham Das Tandon was favoured by Sardar Patel and so

Pandit Nehru felt that Patel – Tandon duo might undermine or restrict his (Nehru's) authority. 2) Nehru felt that Tandon was old fashioned and 3) Tandon did not fit into Nehru's yardstick of 'Secularism'.

Pandit Nehru tried to persuade Rajaji to contest for the Congress party Presidentship. Rajaji declined, because, having been the Head of the State as Governor General, he felt it would be improper to contest as President of a political party. Finally Nehru succeeded in prevailing upon Acharya J.B.Kripalani to contest.

Soon after it was clear that Tandon would succeed, Nehru was vexed and told Rajaji on 26.08.50 that he (Nehru) would resign from the Party as well as Prime Ministership. Rajaji became terribly worried at the whole situation. His daughter Ms. Namagiri (who was looking after Rajaji) has the following to say about this episode





“After Pandit Nehru opened up his mind to Rajaji, he became very worried and restless and did not sleep the whole night “. Next morning Rajaji met Pandit Nehru. After a great deal of persuasion by Rajaji, Nehru reconciled and came to terms with the inevitable, namely Purushothaman Das Tandon becoming the President of the Congress Party.

Again, when the twenty member C.W.C(Congress Working Committee) was to be formed, Pandit

Nehru was very keen that his friend Rafi Ahmed Kidwai of U.P should be included in the committee.

Tandon refused. Patel supported Tandon. Pandit Nehru warned the newly elected party President Tandon that if Kidwani was not included, he (Nehru) would not agree to be in the CWC. Tandon stuck to his ground. Again Rajaji met Pandit Nehru and convinced him to avert a crisis. Nehru rescinded.



Dr.H.V. Hande

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Founder & Director of
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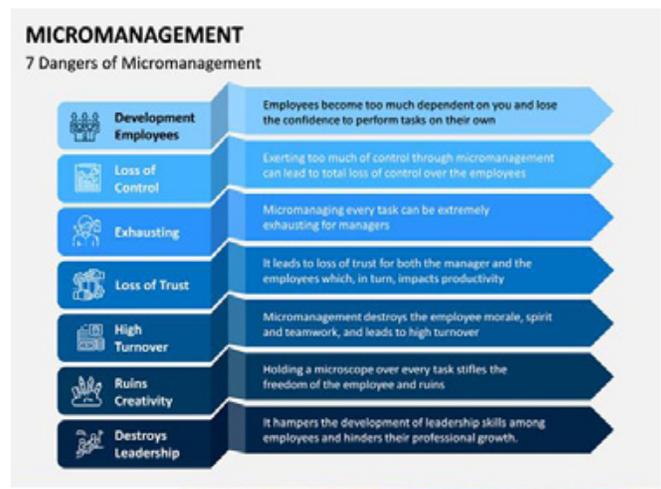
Strategies to Stop Micromanaging & make Team accountable

Holding employees accountable to their assigned tasks without micromanaging is a classic workplace dilemma that many find it difficult to navigate.

The leaders of some of the best workplaces have turned the challenge on its head by building environments where people actually seek accountability and act as owners of the business, in turn eliminating the need for you to hover over them.

To stop /eradicate micromanagement at workplace, Leaders must have awareness on the signs of micromanagement which is most important as they could be doing it without realizing that are micromanaging the team.

Disadvantages of Micro-Management are, Leaders shall implement the Strategies that are listed below which could make team accountable:

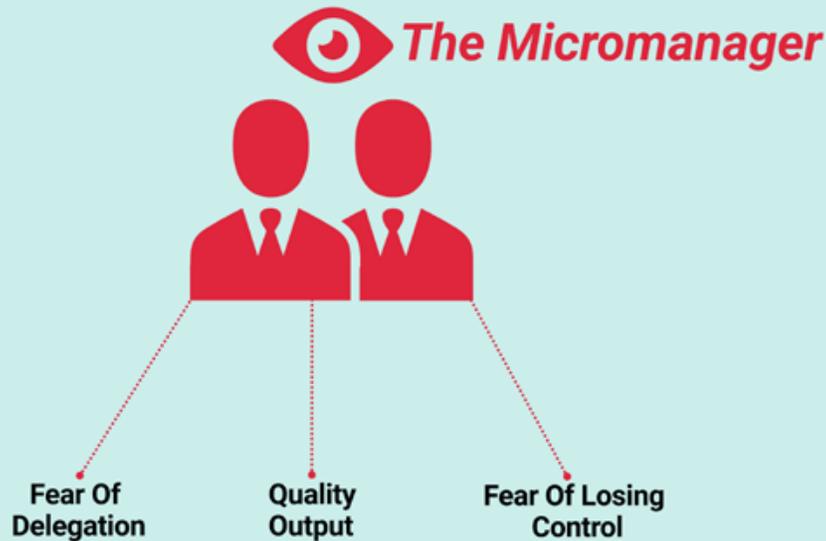


- Manage Expectations, Not Tasks
- Only Do What Only You Can Do
- Ask Employees How They Want To Be Managed
- Focus On Managing Your Culture
- Trust Your Team
- Adopt A Fail-Forward Attitude
- Create Transparency In Project Management



What Is Micromanagement?

Micromanagement is about tightly controlling or observing employees' work. Although in some cases, this management style might be understood, especially for small-scale projects, generally speaking, micromanagement has a negative connotation mainly because **it shows a lack of trust and freedom in the workplace, which leads to adverse outcomes.**

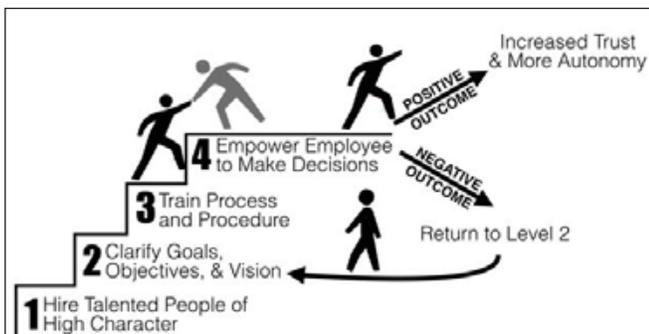


- Be A Facilitator, Not A Taskmaster
- Encourage An Environment Of Intrapreneurship
- Set Aside Your Personal Desire To 'Win'
- Give Them More Responsibility Than You're Comfortable With

1. Commit to hiring the right people. It's much easier to create a culture of accountability with accountable people. Prospective job candidates are to be screened on whether they proactively seek needed information and feedback, and whether

they strive to accomplish team goals. The company should remain loyal to this value, going so far to keep positions open for more than a year if they are unable to find an ideal match between the candidate, the culture and the position.

2. Make people accountable to each other. There is nothing like peer pressure to drive behavior. HR policy should enable employees are given the chance to give anonymous feedback to various teams in a quarterly satisfaction survey and an annual benefits opinion survey. Through these

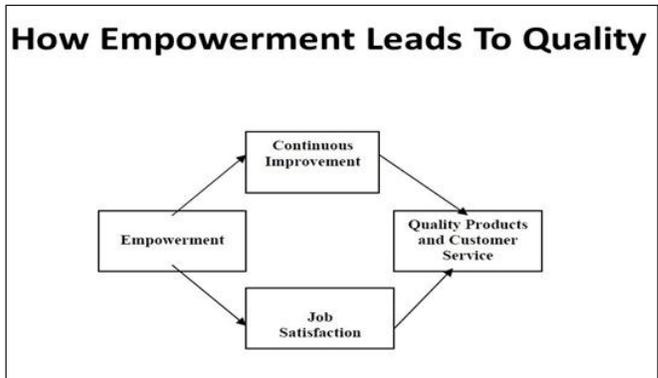




regular audits, employees have the chance to give genuine feedback on performance from other departments as it relates to their job. The goal is to create a productive community culture.

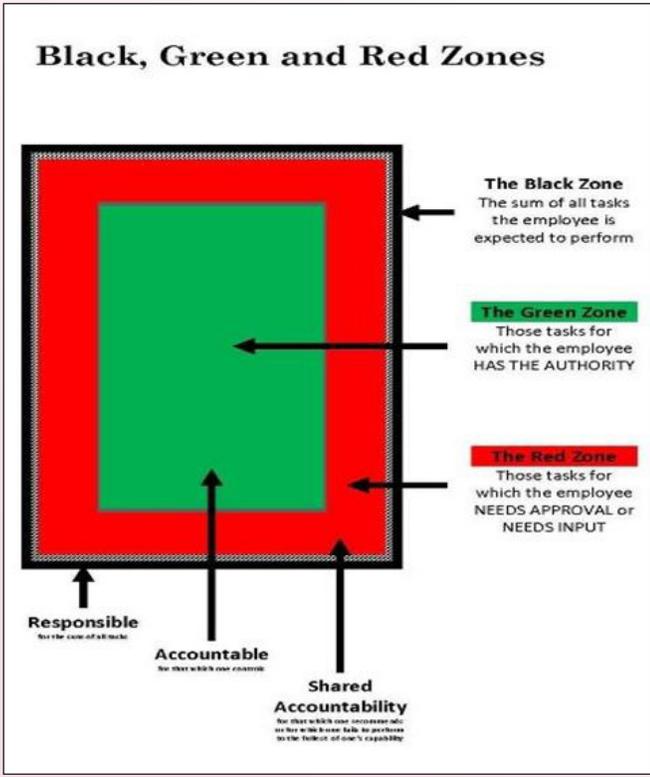
3. Clearly and frequently articulate expectations. Entrepreneurs often find themselves micromanaging their staffs when they don't adequately communicate

their expectations. During my assignment to lead Project team I've noted that Employees of a construction management firm, were evaluated twice annually, and receive personal, detailed feedback which helped them to refine their processes. New tracking measures, goals and developmental needs are determined during these evaluations.



4. Give employees decision-making power. Your employees are much more likely to “own” their work when they help create or have a voice in what they’re doing.

5. Give them an ownership stake. If you want employees to work like they own the company, then give them a stake in the game. For example, a sense of ownership is instilled through its long-term incentive “Buy-in Compensation Plan”.



Striking the right balance between empowerment and accountability is not easy. But small business owners who set the right tone will enjoy the benefits of greater employee initiative and innovation, as well as the freedom to transition from managing to leading.



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Poet Kannadasan

Poet Kannadasan born on Twenty Fourth June Nineteen Twenty Seven

Indeed a great film lyricist, writer deeply involved in religious study

Wrote ARTHAMULLA INDHU MADHAM-
“Meaningful Hindu Religion”

Who lived opposite to my house in Karaikudi during the Nineteen Fifties!

Noted lyricist Kannadasan visited Maha Periyava of Kanchi Peetham and as usual they discussed Aanmeegam. Kannadasan was earlier an atheist and wrote articles criticizing religion.

Slowly he changed due to the effect of Maha Periyava who weaned him from useless rationalism. But the basic nature of criticism still continues.

He asked Maha Periyava when milk is White then how come the Parkadal is shown as Megavarnam?

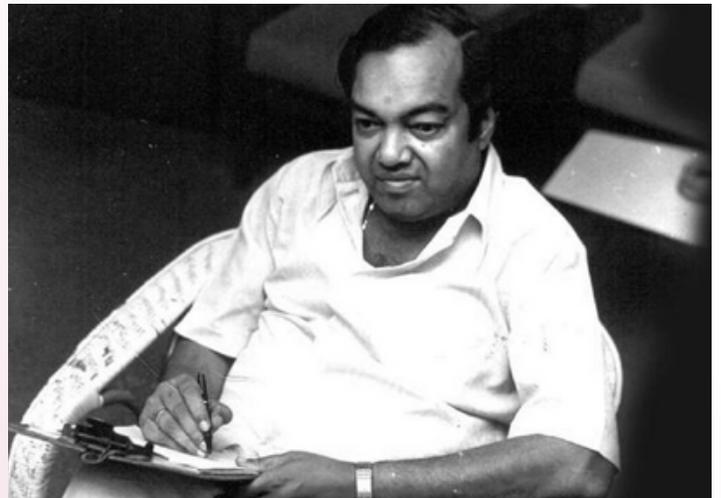
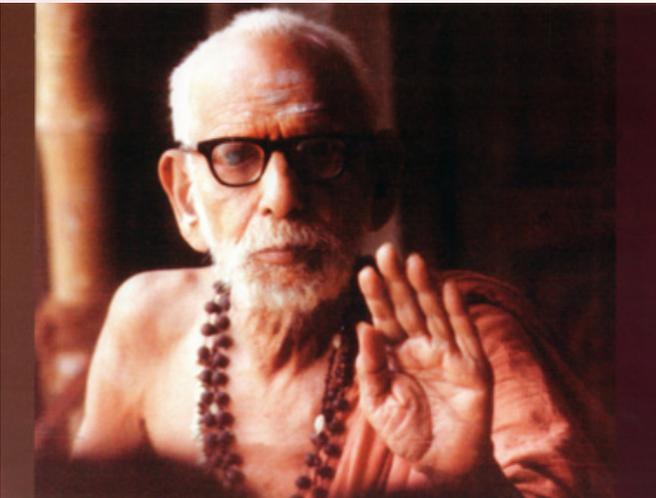
Has the colour of Mahavishnu dissolved in the ocean of milk.

Acharyal gave a smile. He just said ‘Enjoy you will get the reply by noon’.

Kannadasan was perplexed. He dared not say anything. Vummidi Bangaru Chetty visited Sri Matham that afternoon. Both Kannadasan and Vummidiyar belonged to the same Chettiar community and greeted each other in their traditional way. Afterwards Vummidiyar placed a Large Green Emerald at the Acharyal’s feet pleading him to accept . The sage had no discrimination for a gem and a monolithic rock.

He asked the staff member of the mutt to bring milk in a vessel. After it was brought he asked Vummidiyar to immerse the emerald in milk.

Now this was a shock to the Jeweller. This is the process used to check the genuineness of emeralds in his field.



Did the Kanchi seer suspect his intentions or the gem. Silently he did. Acharyal then Called Kannadasan to see. Kannadasan was shocked. The milk turned pale green and a tinge of light emanated from the Emerald immersed in milk.

Kannadasan was speechless. How did this happen? Acharyal explained the reason in a scientific way about the change of colour and drew parallel with Parkadal "When Parandaaman is lying in the parkadal,he too emits such radiance. Hence it is Megavarnam'.

Tears filled Kannadasan who then immediately composed the famous song 'Tiruparkadalil pallikondar Sriman Narayana.....'

As for Vummidiars, Acharyal Blessed him requesting him to take the Emerald to the Varadaraja Perumal kovil and make a Magudam for the Perumal'.

He too wept for his ignorance that he had felt humiliated earlier when Acharyal told him to immerse the emerald in milk. It was not to test the Genuineness of the Gem.

It was the greatness of this Gnana Guru to drive away ignorance and guide people.

Jaya Jaya Sankara Hara Hara Sankara!

As a person interested in translations, as commended by Mahakavi Bharathiyar, I thought for a while as to why I should not take up a poem of Kannadasan and translate into English?

The Answer is:

Experience is God!

What comes of birth I asked

God commanded me to take birth and see!

What is said as education I asked

God commanded me to get education and see!

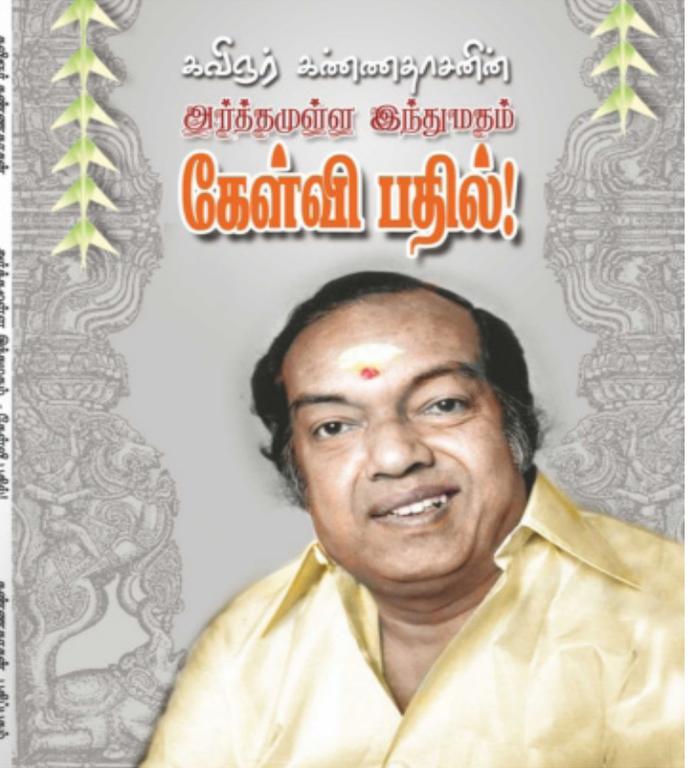
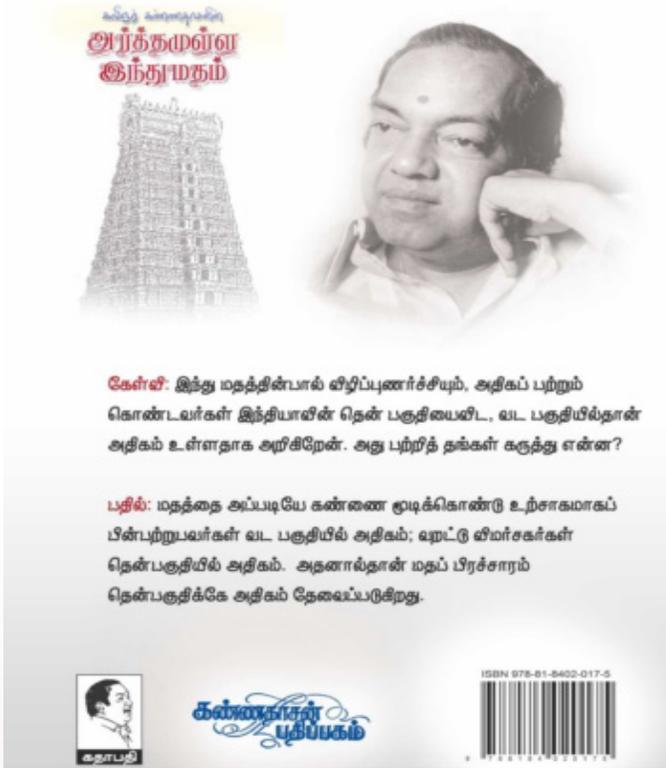
What is said as knowledge I asked

God commanded me to acquire knowledge and see!

**Readers are requested to send their
management related questions.**

IMPACT will get replies from management
experts.

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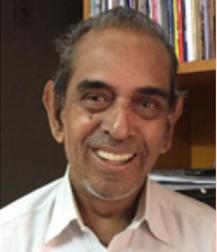


What is said as love I asked
 God commanded me to give love and see!
 What is said as affection I asked
 God commanded me to share and see!
 What is the pleasure with the better half I asked
 God commanded me to get married and see!
 What is said to be a son I asked
 God commanded me to get a son and see!
 What is old age I asked
 God commanded me to become old and see!
 What is said to be poverty I asked
 God commanded me to suffer poverty and see!
 What is after death I asked

God commanded me to die and see!
 If experiencing knowledge is life
 Oh, God what for you are I asked
 God came a little nearer
 Experience itself I am He said!

Mr. N V Subbaraman

A bilingual poet, writer, trainer, translator, thinker and speaker from Chennai Mr. N. V. Subbaraman has written 36 books. His paper, "Valluvam inspired Mahatma Gandhi," was approved for presentation in the international Tirukkural Conference held in Washington, USA. His translated works include Thirukkural, Bharathiyar's Kuyilpattu and Ramana Maharishi's Aksharamanmalai. He was formerly the Deputy zonal Manager, LIC of India.



Kuch Koya, Kuch Paya

(Some Loss, Some Gain)

In any given situation, there is no full gain or full loss. Any solution consists of some benefits and some disadvantages. Similarly there is no person who is fully happy or fully sad in his life. Everybody has some problem, some cheer or some nagging discomfort or the other. There is a saying- There are only two places where a human being is free of worries, they are in the Womb or in the Tomb! So I totally agree with the above maxim in Hindi which mentions- Kuch Koya, Kuch Paya, meaning some Pain, some Gain.

Experience the Hell Gracefully

I recall the following incident:

A boy of 12 years was caught in a lift alone. The lift suddenly stopped working. Panicky, the boy started shouting ' Help' and banging the door. He could hear some sounds and voices. Somebody understood that one person was caught in the lift, which had some problem. He began running towards the ground floor, calling for the Security. Although the boy realized that some help was forthcoming, he was worried how much time this would take. The Security should be available, he should ring up for the Lift Mechanic, that person should be available and he should reach this building fast in the midst of heavy traffic, what not. The boy had a feeling of reeling in his head. He was full of fear and anxiety. Then he just recalled an incident last month where a small girl

of 3 years fell in an unused well in his native village and began crying. Her wailings did not reach the people who were working a little distance away. Luckily for the girl after some time, somebody heard her cries and started running calling for help. By the time, the Fire Engine people could manage to reach this spot, it took 8 hours and the small girl even swooned due to hunger, thirst and tiredness. The boy wondered how much that small girl would have shivered due to fear and trembled seeing some strange creatures in the unused well. She was simply crying for her mother and father. He shuddered to think further. Then he realized how fortunate he was, his shouts were heard within a few minutes and already action was being taken to rescue him. Instead of feeling grateful to God, I am anxious, nervous and even cursing all and sundry for the delay, the boy felt. A thought occurred to him " Why not enjoy this solitude and begin singing?" He began singing and dancing within that small area and started





thinking of all his friends, younger sister and others. As he musing like this, the rescue team arrived in exactly an hour's time and when he came out of the lift, his parents were standing there to embrace him. His father thought that the boy must have been in a state of shock and planned a nice holiday for the entire family to tide over this mental trauma. He asked the boy as to how he was feeling, the boy replied "No doubt, I had a lot of anxiety in the initial few minutes. But on hearing reassuring voices from outside, I became alright and I started experiencing the hell like situation gracefully and remained calm and cool. His parents felt proud looking at their brave son.

Yes, when you start enjoying difficult situations, instead of feeling despondent, even the Hell

will run away from you. Hell feels motivated only when it is feared. When you experience it gracefully, Hell has no place there and it disappears. So even in a tough situation, let us remain courageous, because Tough Times do not last, but Tough People do! Let us look at the brighter side of every thing.

I am not my activities, I am Love, I am Courage and so on

There was an election in our Housing Society for the posts of President and Secretary. One new Member who was taking a lot of interest in the activities of the Society and who was quite enterprising stood for the post of Secretary. His opponent was a very Senior Member of the Society and a person well known to everybody and hence he stood a

very good chance of winning. The new and young member strained his every nerve, met all the flat owners and canvassed for their support. But lo, the results were otherwise. The Senior person won with a thumping majority.

Everybody thought that the defeated member would never come for any meeting- he was very regular and punctual for any activity earlier to election-, would not take any interest and participate in any activity of the society etc. But he continued to be the same, attending meetings, participating enthusiastically, helping in Projects etc. Again some people said mockingly “ He is just showing off to cover his disappointment and anger towards the other members. You will see, He will vanish after a month or two”. But nothing happened like that. The new member continued his enthusiasm, month after month. After an year, one person could not contain himself. He asked the new member “ How are you so normal and cheerful after a heavy loss in the election? Don't you feel like withdrawing yourself from all the activities of the Society, as any person would mostly do?”

The new member replied “ I am not my activities or my qualifications. I am my qualities like Love, Friendliness, Relationships, Service Mentality etc. So the election was not to diminish my character. It was just a part of my life. So I move on, without getting affected by a defeat in the election.”

Life works upon a
compensating balance, and the
happiness we gain in one
direction we lose in another.

Jerome K. Jerome

What an attitude! What an approach to life? Do you allow your losses to affect your character or you count your gains in the bargain and move ahead?

Count your Blessings, not your Missings.

The Pandemic

Even the Corona Virus pandemic has its own plus and minus.

No doubt, we are unable to move around freely, no parties, no gatherings, no office gossip etc.

But we are well improved in our hygiene, avoiding unnecessary expenditure, enjoying home food, no traffic jams, wearing mask and escaping the dust in the roads and what not.

Let us celebrate the plus aspects of the pandemic, instead of crying over the minus features.

There is always a pain and a gain in any situation. No gain without pain is the saying.

So no matter how stressed you are, remember how blessed you are!

R. Venugopal

*Mr. Venugopal has served in
LIC of India from 1968 to 2006
for 38 years and retired as an
Executive Director.*



Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is the emotional attachment employees feel towards their work place, job, role, position within the company, colleagues and culture etc... Employee engagement is the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to the organization, and put discretionary effort into their work.

Employee Involvement: The direct participation of staff to help an organization fulfill its mission and meet its objectives by applying their own ideas, expertise, and efforts towards solving problems and making decisions.

Employee Involvement refers to work structures and processes that allow employees to systematically

give their input into decisions that affect their own work.

Employee engagement is not an exact science. So far, the whole concept has been built on HR experience, positive psychology and business models that engage a company's talent towards a productive culture of success.

At the core of employee engagement, similar to any company's foundation, are some values. These values determine the why, how and what of that company.

In today's economy, you are building your company brand both through external as well as internal efforts. Playing two battlefields at the same time





can prove to be tricky, that is why some companies decide to focus their resources only on the external branding front. Meanwhile, they neglect their internal environment, failing to provide an engaging, challenging and appealing workplace.

So, we came up with 25 ideas that can save a manager in need of some inspiration. If you're pressed for time or simply want to save all these ideas,

1. Assign company values

Assign one of your company's values to a certain employee, every month, based on a peer-voting process. The person who best represented that value can be set as an example and be publicly acknowledged for his actions.

2. Have teams create their own set of values

Designing your own game rules makes playing a lot more fun. Team synergy is not an easy objective

to attain, and it's definitely not a rapid one. But it is essential to the end-game objective and to the overall performance of the project. Having teams create a team culture, based on 2-3 commonly agreed values or ground rules can help nurture and speed up that process.

3. Encourage personal projects

Give employees a 1-2 h/ day window to pursue their own projects. Having people from different departments connecting and bouncing ideas can help get a new perspective. Projects and initiatives can get new directions, encouraging a creativity and energy flow that would only benefit the rest of the working hours. Ever heard of the Blue Sky program?

4. Assign a buddy/mentor for every newcomer

An important part of the onboarding process is having someone answer some really important questions. Questions that someone would be hesitant to simply ask a manager. Building a

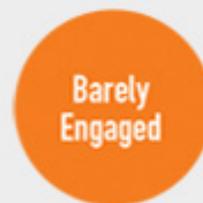
Employee Engagement Profiles



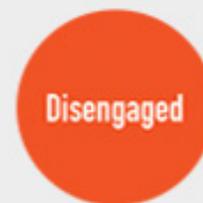
Advocates who intend to stay long-term



Favorable, but something holds them back



Indifferent and at-risk for turnover



Negative and disruptive toward the workplace

trustworthy relationship with someone with more experience in that company can help guide the newcomer. This way he or she can better adapt and grow part of the team.

5. Have themed office days

For the more open-minded companies, this initiative can bring a lot of fun and increase employee loyalty.

6. Have team photos

Have photos of your team on a wall, or frame them around the office. Group photos, funny photos, events photos or random photos snapped when people weren't watching. It's a cultural element that can encourage and foster work relationships and employee engagement.

7. Play the Happiness At Work card game

By applying knowledge of the brain and how we work together, Choose Happiness @ Work engages adult learners in a unique and powerful way. It is a powerful tool that engages learning,

application, humor and team-building in a fun, facilitative experience and it teaches science-based tools in a way that allows people to safely raise and discuss issues, build trust, and boost engagement.

Each of the over 50 scenarios in the game identifies and provides context for a common workplace situation, followed by a succinct scientific justification for why it is a problem at work. Try it!

8. Encourage charity

I got an email the other day, after downloading a resource online that simply made my day. The awesome people at Network For Good came up with a Corporate Charity Gift Card. You can personalize your own company gift card and reward employees by allowing them to make a charitable donation to an organization of their choice. Take Aveda's example. The company came up with a cause that was aligned with their company's mission, empowered employees to team up and raise money for that cause, in a friendly but competitive manner. And it worked.

9. Encourage volunteering

If you find yourself doubting the classical money-to-charity approach, you should try the new volunteer-for-a-cause angle. Give your employees a couple of days a month to volunteer for a cause they support. Here's a great reference article.

10. Raise salaries

I'm sure at least half of the people reading this article will have an eyebrow up at this point. Bear with me. In 2008, attrition among AT&T Mobility's retail sales consultants cost millions annually and impacted the service experience. The company reduced costs, increased revenues and improved the customer experience by developing employees to be more inspired and engaged.

11. Remind people your company's mission and values

It's important that you emphasize, once in a while, what your company stands for. People need to be reminded of why they are doing what they're doing.

12. Recognize and encourage innovation

You might have heard some pretty inspiring ideas around the office. What about that project that

came together so well and had some amazing improvements that no one initially thought of? Find out who came up with that idea. Give them a friendly "Good job!" or recognize them publicly for going the extra mile.

13. Celebrate achievements

Big or small, they are the solid proof that the work people are putting in has meaning. No one can go through tasks and assignments for months, or even years without burning out. Refill their energy tanks with some recognition and celebrate their hard work. This is also a great way to glue together teams.

14. Celebrate people

Birthdays, promotions, retirements, newcomers welcoming, there are plenty of important moments where people can be put at the front of the company. They make the company and it's a great and relaxing way of showing them that they matter.

15. Give and receive feedback

Yes, everyone knows that and everyone talks about it. But it's really hard to implement. You're dealing with peoples' work, their position, their emotions and key success factors. It's a dangerous mix that



Benefits of an Employee Engagement Plan



the wrong feedback can cause to explode. Keep it simple. Offer a framework or a system that employees can use with confidence and honesty. Let them know you value their opinion and, most

importantly, act on that feedback. More thoughts on feedback.

16. Try some unusual employee engagement ideas

It's the small things that can sometime make a difference. Like having colored mugs at work or an awesome air freshener.

And since we're on the Out-of-the-box topic, you could try an Art Team Building. The guys at Team Building Singapore came up with this concept that encourages creativity and gives employees a different way to connect. Get creative!

17. Show respect

This should be the cornerstone for every office interaction. Especially when it comes to people in

10 Opportunities to Improve Your Employee Engagement



different hierarchies. Read more about Respect in the Workplace.

18. Empower your employees

Nothing creates a greater sense of responsibility and ownership like having the decision power. Don't be afraid to let people be their own leader. It's surely a great way to build trust, as opposed to micro-management.

19. Encourage learning

Challenge and support employees in learning and developing their skills. Not only will you have a motivated and well-prepared workforce but you'll see an increase in employee happiness and employee engagement.

20. Get social

Go out, have fun, have teambuilding's and weekend competitions! It can be really overwhelming to work, work, work 8-12h a day and crave a weekend that passes in a blink of an eye. Join sports competitions and encourage team playing activities.

21. Make sure that people have all the resources they need

This doesn't sound like other typical employee engagement ideas but it has an important purpose. You need to make sure that you have the basics covered before you move on to other, more abstract, ideas. Equip your employees with the tools and systems that will make their job easier. This way, you'll get them to invest their energy into doing great work, instead of wasting precious time.

22. Ask the people who really know employee engagement

Being as this is a fairly new business component, you should trust the experts. Consult the right people

to help you build a solid employee engagement strategy.

23. Get answers from your employees as well

This is related to feedback but it's more of an indirect feedback. Monitor and analyze your employees, your teams and the overall workspace. You'll get some essential pointers into what works and what you can improve.

24. Build long-term engagement

Don't settle for a quick fix. Develop a long-term employee engagement strategy with clear objectives and action steps for more than a year, then re-evaluate and build on it.

25. Try and try again

We've based this advice on our experience and the experience of others that we've worked it. However, what works for one company might not work for another. It's important that you try and adapt, until you find the perfect angle for your employee engagement strategy.

Jayprakash B. Zende

Consultant in employee involvement & freelance trainer



How to Think Smart About Your Downtime

With the right approach, your downtime can reap benefits for your career and optimize your work life.

We all know constant connection makes it harder than ever to switch off when we finish work for the day. It's vital to set aside time to properly recharge. But let's say you already heeded that advice—does it matter what you actually do in your downtime? Moreover, is there a way you can use your hobbies to not only have fun and unwind, but also to boost confidence in your work life?

Related findings crop up repeatedly in research literature. For instance, sports-based hobbies are particularly beneficial for recharging. Fred Zijlstra, a professor of work psychology at Maastricht University, says this is because they are fun and require you to concentrate on what you're doing. "Physical activities work well, in particular when people have a rather desk-bound job, because they require active engagement and they distract the mind from work-related issues."

However, psychology has also thrown up some contradictory research, especially in terms of whether you should pick hobbies that resemble your work or are completely different. Here's our look at how to evaluate for yourself based on your current priorities—even if your only requirement is to avoid Zoom outside of work hours.

Balance out your working life

One approach is based around achieving balance and recovery. This suggests you use your downtime to do something completely different from your job. That way you'll feel happier and more refreshed, which will have trickle down benefits in your workday.

Dr. Jessica de Bloom, who splits her time between Tampere University in Finland and University of Groningen in the Netherlands, says to think about this in terms of the satisfaction of your various "psychological needs," specifically detachment, relaxation, autonomy, mastery, meaning, and affiliation.

"It might be helpful to first understand which of your needs are least satisfied [by work] and choose hobbies which support these needs," she says. "For instance, if you have a work situation which offers very little possibilities for social interaction and fulfillment of the need for affiliation, it might be beneficial to choose a social hobby. If I have a job which is not very challenging, I may want to choose





a hobby where I can learn new skills and experience mastery and competence.”

Nurture work skills in your downtime

Yet there’s another perspective from work psychology called Enrichment Theory, pointing out that the skills and experiences we build up in our free time can flow through and complement our work performance, which suggests you’re better off looking for a hobby that resembles your job in some way. If you were looking to harness your leadership skills, for example, then facilitating a book group or playing the role of team captain for your local weekend soccer team could be the perfect training ground.

“Enrichment Theory is about the positive interactions between different roles, it outlines different resources you might generate within one role—material resources, psychological resources, social contacts—and you apply them in another and it boosts your performance in that other domain,” explains Dr. Ciara Kelly, a psychologist at Sheffield University Management School in the UK.

Reflect on whether a hobby is a passion or just a bit of fun

Dr. Kelly led a recent study (free to read online) that aimed to reconcile the two apparently contradictory perspectives emerging from work psychology: one based on balance and recovery, the other on enrichment. In effect, both perspectives are correct, depending on the attitude you have to a particular hobby.

Kelly and her colleagues surveyed over a hundred volunteers repeatedly over a seven-month period, asking them whether they’d spent more time than usual on their hobby and how confident they were feeling in their ability to perform well at work. Crucially, they also asked the volunteers to rate how seriously they took their hobby and how similar it was to their work.

The results paint a more nuanced picture of how we should think about our leisure time. It’s not that some hobbies are better than others, nor that you should always aim for hobbies that are either similar or different from your job. Rather, it all depends on the kind of attitude and approach you have toward a particular hobby—specifically whether you take it seriously or not.

“A serious approach would be one where you strongly identify with the particular activity, where you could describe yourself as ‘a climber’ rather than climbing just being something that you do,” explains Kelly. “It could be something where you’re quite invested, you intend to get better at it, and intend to keep doing it into the future.”

Beware burnout from serious hobbies that are similar to work

For serious hobbies that were also similar to a person’s job, Kelly’s team found that spending too much time on them actually dented confidence at





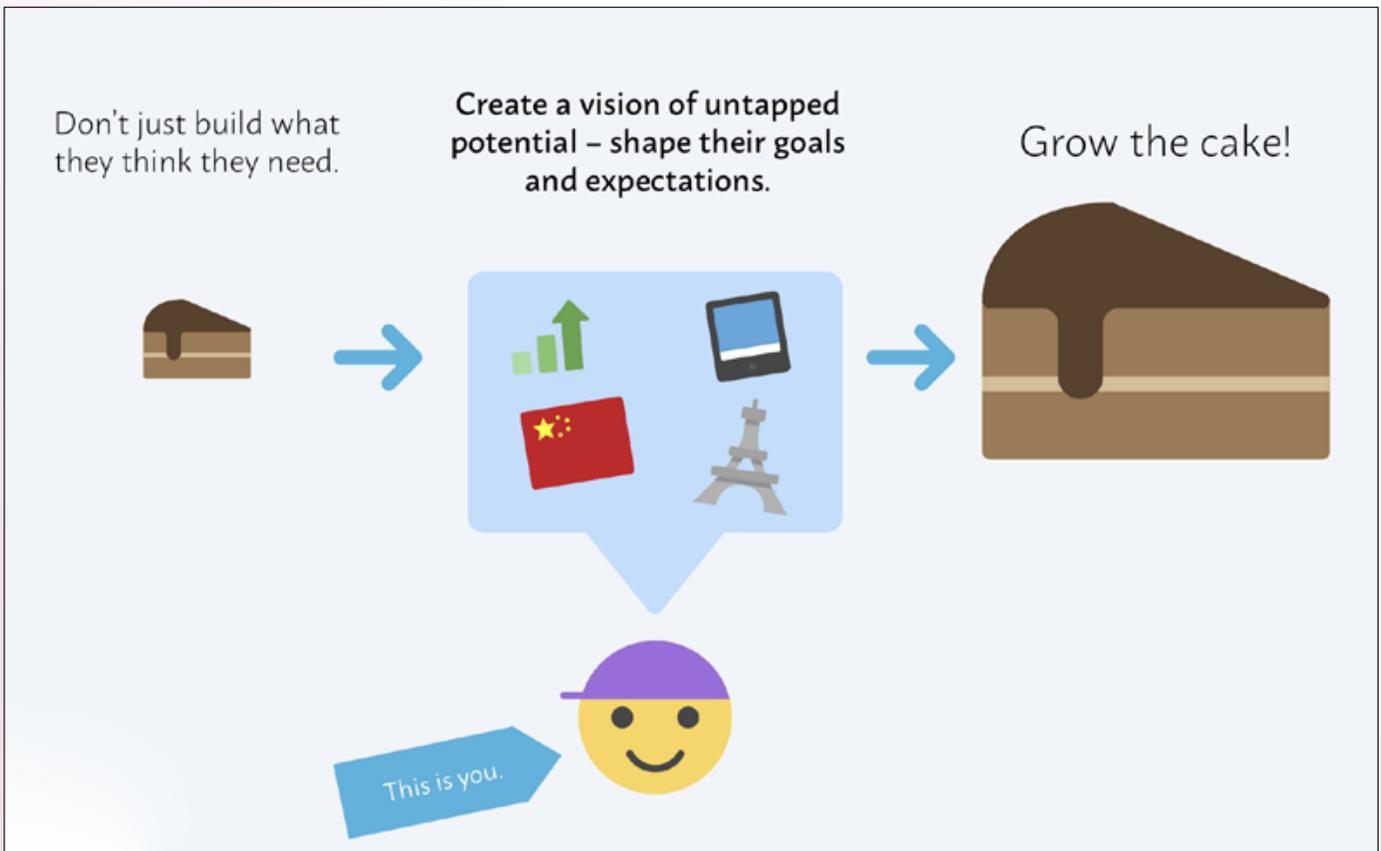
work. “If you get the situation where you’re highly committed to the hobby and it’s just like work, and you’re invested in both sides [play and work], and you spend more time on it, then you get a bit of an adverse impact,” says Kelly.

In a sense, if you’re driving yourself hard at work and in your hobby and they’re both pretty similar, you’re effectively spreading yourself too thin. However, this wasn’t an issue for the research volunteers who took a casual approach to a hobby that was similar to their job—they benefited from the overlap, like the manager who

gains leadership skills from time as captain on the soccer pitch.

Of course, this raises the question of what counts as “similar.” For the research, hobbies were categorized as similar based on the volunteers’ own perceptions. For instance, one of the volunteers was a school teacher who felt that playing the Dungeons and Dragons game was similar to work, perhaps because of the need to improvise and be creative in both roles. Likewise, you’re probably the best judge of whether there’s an overlap in your hobby and work.

If you sense that there is a degree of similarity and you’re highly committed to the hobby, Kelly’s advice is not to give it up. “That would be really depressing!” she says. Rather, it pays to be more mindful of the rhythms of your work and hobby, to avoid potential clashes when either are going through a particularly demanding phase. And take care not to overload yourself on screen time if your extracurricular have gone virtual.





Dedication to hobbies that are sufficiently different can pay dividends

It’s worth noting that taking a hobby seriously wasn’t a problem if it was sufficiently different from work, likely because the contrast prevented too much conflict or exhaustion from competing demands. In fact, spending more time on a serious hobby that’s totally different from work was also beneficial, leading to feelings of greater professional confidence.

That makes sense because whenever we invest in any activity over the longer term, we learn empowering lessons about how dedication leads to gains and improvement, which is bound to spill over and increase self-confidence at work.

I can relate to that myself. I’ve spent the last seven years or so playing in a local table-tennis league, climbing from my club’s E team to the B team and advancing through the league divisions. I’ve experienced first-hand that you get out what you put in, which has translated into greater motivation and confidence to improve in my career. At the same time, of course, the game itself couldn’t be more different from my day job as a writer, so there’s no risk of a clash of demands.

To recap, the new research found that taking a hobby seriously was beneficial—if it was sufficiently different from work; at the same time, a hobby similar to work was beneficial if it was just a casual past-time. In other words, they’re probably aren’t good and bad hobbies, it’s more about being smart in your approach.

It’s important not to overthink these things, though. Jessica de Bloom says it can become a real problem if we start feeling the need to be perfect employees in our free time as well as at the office—don’t put pressure on yourself to excel at sports and to be a perfect parent. To return to Professor Zijlstra’s message, remember the best way to recharge (which will benefit you at work) is to use your leisure time to do something you enjoy and that’s sufficiently engaging. Anything from collaging to playing tennis with friends could fit the bill—just find what works for you.

By Christian Jarrett

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