



Work Harder – Not Smarter

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I know, I bet you that you think the title of this article is the wrong way around – but, unfortunately, that’s how the vast majority of so-called “normal” people approach their daily routine. A recent survey of US employees by Gallup found that 74% of people don’t like their work or workplace – and are either “sleep-walking” through their day or are actively engaged in trying to make the remaining 26% dissatisfied too!

If you start each working day with the useless thought that you don’t like your work or workplace, you’ve already made that day’s work so much harder. You already have to work harder, rather than smarter, because your whole day’s experience will be seen through the lens of your dislike for what you’re doing. That state of mind makes everything difficult – not just work, but how you arrive home in the evening – exhausted, annoyed, stressed and even depressed. As a client once put it to me many years ago – “I arrive home exhausted and stressed – and the first thing I do is sit down with my wife for a drink to make sure that she ends up as exhausted and stressed as I am! We go down that slippery slope together where the evening degenerates into another lousy night – and we get up the next morning and start the whole thing all over again!”

An extreme case? Maybe – maybe not! With almost three quarters of the workforce dissatisfied, with stress accounting for more lost “man-days” than any other illness (in the US and UK), and with over 90% of people (or, at least, males) worried about money – there has to be something more exciting than what passes for the normal routine life. There is – but you don’t necessarily have to change your routine or your work – you have to change your mind.

With the world economy as it is at present, you may not be able to pick and choose between jobs – you may have no control over your employment circumstances or the kind of work you’re doing. But the one thing over which you can exercise total control is your own state of mind. And, if you do grasp control of your own state of mind (and research would suggest that as many as 96% of people either cannot or couldn’t be bothered) your whole life changes.

I’m not suggesting for one moment that you can “happy” yourself into liking your work and, as a result, your life will be much better – that would simply be delusional! What I am suggesting is that you take the “hard” out of work by making sure that you start each day in a calm, clear and present state of mind. You may well respond that the sheer prospect of another day’s drudgery means that

that is simply not possible. You'd be wrong – because you choose whether to be calm and present – outside circumstances do not dictate your state of mind. Thinking that you don't like your work is a useless thought. Thinking that your work is boring is a useless thought. Thinking that you don't like your boss is a useless thought – I bet you that you can come up with a book full of similar useless thoughts.

Get over yourself – research (the same research that indicates that 96% of people are somehow not uncomfortable enough to do anything about the state of their minds and the state of their lives) shows us that of the 4% of exceptionally successful people, some of those uncommonly happy people do some of the (apparently) most boring jobs on the planet – from industrial piece-work on production lines, to tending animals. It's not the work they do that makes them exceptionally successful – it's their state of mind. They have not added the "hard" to work – they're working smarter.

And that's the way we can all be – all you have to do is develop your ability to have a clear and present mind. That way, you'll simply do what you have to do and don't do what you don't have to do – an extraordinary amount of our day is wasted doing things that we needn't bother with or, indeed, doing things that we know are counter-productive – no doubt, you can think of your own personal list without any difficulty. In other words, stop wasting your energy – stop pouring your energy into useless thought, bad habits and time wasters.

The extraordinary thing is that research shows – and quantum physics proves – that when you operate with a clear and present state of mind, not only will you work smarter, but your mind will be alert enough to spot opportunities that the normal mind simply cannot see. That means that you could end up doing a completely new job, or get a big break at work – opportunities that you'd otherwise miss. I know that sounds strange, but psychology tells us that we only perceive what we expect to perceive. Stop expecting your day to be difficult, stop expecting your work to be hard – start expecting something different – and something different will effortlessly happen.