



Doing

More with Less



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Chapter 1: The Art of Doing Fake Work

Studies show that when employees feel accomplished at work, they are 259% more likely to seek growth opportunities in the company. But the truth is, many employees feel they don't accomplish much on-the-job.

Frankly, this is true a lot of times.

You see, hard work doesn't always translate to real work. Employees could be working hard but at the wrong things. This can negatively impact the result and reduce their sense of accomplishment.

In corporate parlance, such work is called "Fake Work."

Why people indulge in fake work?

- They have poor subject/role knowledge.
- They are bad at managing their workload.
- They tend to get easily overwhelmed by stress.
- They have the wrong priorities and intentions.





The problem with fake work is that it expends a lot of the company's valuable resources without achieving any strategic objectives. The reality is, employees can accomplish things if they do real, meaningful work.

And here's better news – you don't need a lot to do meaningful work.

A few ways in which employees can do more with less

- By being open to learning and trying new things.
- By managing tasks carefully.
- By utilizing the resources smartly.
- By working with the right people.
- By taking advantage of the lemons, life gives them.

In this book, we'll delve deeper into each of these strategies.





Chapter 2: Start the Perspective Shift

It's important to acknowledge here that for any meaningful change to take place, there must first be buy-in from all the employees in the company.

This is why leaders and managers must actively try to bring a positive perspective shift in employees. Here are a few ways to do this:



Tactfully show them the issues

Fake work can be avoided if the employee knows which tasks are wrong or problematic. This is when leaders must carefully help them identify the areas that require improvement. Once the problem is identified, it becomes easier to address them.



Get down into the arena yourself

Just directing employees or yelling at them won't make them work better. What does help is actually showing them what they need to do. Work with your team on a one-on-one basis and help them find unique solutions to working more effectively.





Put outdated practices to rest

Each company has its age-old practices. They stifle positive growth in the company and are better if put to rest. Identify such practices and replace them with new-age rules instead.



Don't be afraid to take tough calls

Finally, have the courage to make difficult decisions when they're needed. This is the only way to discourage bad workplace practices and encourage meaningful work.





Chapter 3: Get Curious

Once you have employee buy-in, it becomes easier to get them to stop fake work and do more with less.

The next step is to instill curiosity and a desire to learn in your team.

The case for curiosity in the workplace

Curiosity is one of the key stimulants for proactiveness and creativity. When your employees are curious, they actively try to learn and build new things. There's more innovation and creation in the company.

Curiosity propels intra-team and inter-team collaboration. When your staff is curious to work on new projects, they're willing to go out of their way to partner with new people. Conflict is reduced and communication is improved as a result. This can create the best corporate culture.

Finally, curious employees always find better and more efficient ways of working. In fact, these employees are the ones who find smart ways to do more work with less. This increases the overall performance and profitability of the company.





Top 5 ways to get your staff to be more curious about work

Employers play an integral role in fostering a culture of curiosity in the workplace. Some of the things you should do encourage curiosity are:



Make brainstorming sessions the norm

Don't let brainstorming become a one-off event. Give your team space and freedom to put forth their ideas all the time. This way, you'll have a steady stream of new ideas coming your way. You won't ever miss an idea that may one day become your golden ticket.



Ask open-ended questions

The best way to snub curious employees is to ask them close-ended questions. Instead, when talking to your staff, ask them open-ended questions. Since such questions don't have a "this or that" answer, they give your team the opportunity to really think things through.



Surprise your team

Sometimes, all you need to get ideas to flow is to jump-start the brain.





You can do this by giving your team a surprise. This could be in the form of a new project or the opportunity to speak 1-on-1 to senior management or an invitation to attend an honored corporate event.

These surprises can be great motivators for people to get curious, start learning, and creating.



Bring down the barriers

An employee will be curious only if he or she is encouraged to be curious. But if the doors to your office are closed or if senior management refuses to entertain new ideas, curiosity will be stifled.

So, pull down the walls, open up the lines of communication and listen actively to what your team has to say.



Give autonomy

Giving your team the power to make decisions for themselves will not only make them more accountable, but it will make them smarter workers. Such employees always find better ways to do more work with less, and they design the best practices for their respective roles.





Chapter 4: Make the Right Choices

Curiosity can be a double-edged sword. Your team may get carried away and focus on things that may not help achieve strategic objectives.

Your team should be taught how to channel their curiosity and prioritize tasks that are essential to strategic success while ignoring/eliminating the ones that are non-essential. This way, valuable resources won't be wasted and more will be done using less.



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6 things that help you prioritize objectives/tasks and meet deadlines



Speak to your supervisor for objectives-fit

The boss's priorities are a combination of the priorities of the entire team. So before you start working, have a conversation with your supervisor. Understand





what their objectives are and see how your role's objectives fit-in here. This can give you clarity about how to tackle work and how to prioritize tasks.



Make a Master To-do list

A Master To-do list is a comprehensive list that contains all of the tasks that you need to do in a given period of time. Make this a running list.

In a column next to the task, write down the estimated time it might take to complete each activity. You should also set a tentative start-date and end-date for each task. This way, you'll be aware of the time constraints for each task, and you'll make smarter decisions.



Check tasks against a priority matrix

Author & businessman Steven Covey recommends that companies use a priority matrix when planning work. This matrix helps you define which tasks are important and urgent and which aren't. Based on which quadrant you assign each task to, you can make an informed decision about which activities to start with and which to push back.





Assess the value of high-priority tasks

You may have many tasks that are urgent and important. But time won't permit you to do all of them in the same day. The best way to ensure that your limited time and resources yield the best results, is to assess the task's value.

Evaluate how the completion of each task will affect the company as a whole. The higher and more extensive the impact of the task, the sooner you should finish it.



Delegate non-essential tasks

If the tasks are not urgent/important, delegate them to subordinates. This way, you'll free-up time to tackle tasks that are of actual value and importance. Plus, you'll be using your limited resources much better.

When delegating, follow the 6T rule. Delegate tasks only if they're – Tiny, Tedious, Time-consuming, Time-sensitive, Teachable and (you're) Terrible-at-it.



Determine the pattern of regular interruptions

Interruptions include telephone calls, daily huddles/meetings, messages by colleagues etc. While interruptions can come at any time, some do follow a pattern. Recognize this pattern and find ways to minimize time wastage.





For example, you can set yourself busy on the messaging service at times you know people will message you. Or, you can review meeting agendas beforehand and only attend those that are important to your job.





Chapter 5: Don't Invent – Rehash

Once you've prioritized your tasks, its time to get started on them. This is where fake work manifests itself.

Oftentimes, employees over-complicate their tasks. They may feel that the resources that the company provides are insufficient or outdated to meet their responsibilities. They may ask for higher resource allocation or completely new resources altogether.

Both of these are detrimental to the company. The truth is, companies can do high-impact work with limited resources. If you're smart about it, you only need to recycle/rehash your resources to meet your current needs.

3 ways to recycle your existing resources



Allocate older technology to training or research

If you have any equipment or a computer that is too old to be used in the field, you can use it to train new joiners. You can also use them to test new software/viruses and conduct experiments that you can't do on new machines.





Upcycle or repurpose your outdated equipment

Instead of throwing away your old equipment, disassemble the parts and create things like lamps, tables, paperweights, and more. This can avoid your having to spend money on new resources.

You can also repurpose materials. Are the batteries in your equipment still working? You can use them to power the lights in the office. Do you have a lot of one-side-printed? Use them as packaging materials.

You should even repurpose your content instead of commissioning new pieces. Convert your blog to podcasts, memes, infographics, and vice versa.



Revisit old data to get new insights

While its important to get the latest data for the best results, there is no harm in using old data to supplement your work. In fact, the best place for data collection is always your company's archives. You may find insights that your colleagues had missed before.

This data is also very helpful in showing trends that can help you come up with ingenious products and services for the future.

How can employers motivate staff to work in environments with limited resources?





Tie their compensations with resource savings

You can provide a commission or a bonus for every percentage of resources that your team has saved or reduced while working. Of course, the caveat is that work should still be top-notch.



Publicly compliment their thrifty habits

Public appreciation can be a great motivator for many employees. When you praise someone for their ability to do more with less, they will continue to do the same in the future too.



Encourage your staff to get creative with the resources they have

Creativity empowers people to take the smallest of things and transform them into something spectacular. So, give your staff just need-only resources and encourage them to get creative with them.

Giving your team autonomy to use the allocated resources as they see fit, will enable them to plan better, work smarter, and do more with less.



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Chapter 6: Partner For Success

Networking can have a tremendously positive impact on the success of an individual in the company. This includes helping the individual become a better worker.

How networking helps employees do more with less

Networking helps employees:

- Discover new work opportunities.
- Get new ideas and perceptions.
- Collaborate with other teams & departments.
- Access limited data, technology & resources faster.



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By doing all this, networking provides employees the opportunities they need to do more impactful work.

Tips for developing workplace networks quickly





To leverage the benefits that come from networking, employees need to build solid workplace relationships. Here's how you can do this:



Research all networking events in your company beforehand

Learn about the speakers and key attendees. This makes it easier to introduce yourself. LinkedIn can provide good topics of conversation in terms of schooling, common interests etc. You can also learn about the projects they're working on and show interest in them. Maybe you can offer your skills to their service.



Use a creative name on your name tag at the event

This can be an eye-catching talking point and an ice-breaker. For example, Legal Guru Eric or Production Pundit Jane



Network with everyone

At the event, focus both on people you already know and want to strengthen your network with, plus new people you want to meet.





Stand at the right spot

If there's a line to meet a key attendee – join it. You can use this opportunity to speak to the people who're in the line with you.

If the networking event is at a restaurant, stand close to the bar. This is the easiest and most accessible way to approach event attendees.



Pay attention to body language

Keep an open body language to ensure a positive networking experience. A few things you should implement are:

- Direct eye contact
- Smiling & greeting hello
- Strong handshake
- Head tilt (indicates active listening)
- Nodding intermittently when talking to someone
- Back straight & arms open
- Not leaning on the table





Remember people's names for the next meeting

This can strengthen your professional relationship and make the person feel valued (after all you remember their name). To make this easier, try associating each person's name with some key characteristic/feature they have. For example, a weird haircut, an exotic eye color etc.

How to avoid networking with negative people

Companies have their fair share of negative influences. Here's how you can actively steer clear of negative people:

- Distance yourself from negative people.
- Set boundaries for the type of interaction you have with them.
- Consciously control your reactions, so as not to antagonize.
- Take control of the conversation and turn it towards the positive.
- Find like-minded people who also want to learn and grow in the company.





Chapter 7: Become Serendipitous

So far, we've been talking about all the things employees must consciously do, in order to achieve more with less. But sometimes, letting things happen at their own pace can help you become better and smarter workers. This is called being serendipitous.

By becoming serendipitous employees can come across the best of workplace opportunities. They can organically gain inspiration and ideas to do more with less.

What does a culture of serendipity involve?

Serendipity doesn't just refer to “unexpected, but happy accidents.” In a company, being serendipitous means:

- Adopting a mindset that is free of fear and uncertainty.
- Having in-place resources that can handle any unexpected challenges.
- Seeking timely insights about the latest development in the respective roles/fields.
- Developing a keen eye for value creation.





This is something that must be implemented company-wide.

Factors that can give rise to serendipitous experiences

We can introduce a culture of serendipity in the workplace if we foster an environment that is:

- Curious
- Creative
- Courageous
- Connected
- Challenged

This type of environment makes employees more receptive and open to the idea of unexpected discoveries.

Tips to consciously introduce serendipity in the workplace



Design your physical workplaces to lead to employee interactions

The best ideas come out of the most random encounters. That's why companies need to encourage such rendezvous in the workplace. A well-designed office space can help here.





If employees get the opportunity to walk past their peers' or supervisors' desks, it can become the stage for chance encounters and stimulating conversations. These experiences can give employees new ideas, outlooks and chances to collaborate/network. Together, they can give employees the resources they need to do more with less.



Add technology to the mix

Technology can make communication and collaboration significantly easier. For example, a corporate social media platform can support inter-company announcements, conversations and exchanges. Employees can see what their colleagues are up to, can appreciate their efforts or ask for help.

Such virtual and digital platforms can also be used to seek innovative solutions to corporate challenges/objectives. Opinion polls, quizzes and feedback can be initiated on these channels.





Host non-work-related team building activities

The best interactions take place when there is no stress of missed deadlines, performance errors and other workplace issues. This is why one of the best ways to introduce serendipity in the company, is to encourage non-work team building interactions.

Some companies actually schedule activities like random lunch breaks or coffee with strangers. Here, team members who have never interacted with each other will be made to spend their break together to get to know each other.

Such events and others like corporate talent shows, sports days and picnics can lead to new networking opportunities. These can then help employees access opportunities that allow them to do more with less.



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WRAPPING UP

Companies are moving towards a culture of doing more with less. By following the above steps, you too can learn how to do more with less, while helping your team learn how to do so too.



A few books that we recommend:

