



## **Workshops and Presentations** **Written Notes and relevant material**

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Please note that we have undergone changes over the years, hence our letter head can vary at times depending on when the workshop/presentation was run.

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# **-WORKSTYLE-**

**The Lifestyle you have at Work!**

**A Three Hour Workshop**

## PROGRAM

- Introduction
- *Personal Style at Work*
- Work Culture
- Training and Development
- Workload And Perception
- Quality Control
- Workstyle Vs Lifestyle
- Recognise Change In Your Work
- Economic
- Adaptability & Flexibility
- Protestant Work Ethic
- Awareness
- Summary

## WORK STYLE

**-Your Life Style at work!**

### Introduction

We are all familiar with what lifestyle is. We devote a considerable amount of energy and time, not to mention money, to what we consider is our lifestyle. Whether it be landscaping the garden, renovating the kitchen, sleeping in or having breakfast at the Hyatt, it is all time and resources that we devote to our lifestyle.

Interestingly, of that 24-hour day which comprises our lifestyle, one third of it is devoted to work! Yet, not everyone devotes the same amount of energy, time and resources to that one particular third of their day. But not only is it one third of the day, it is also the most important third of the day. We are awake! It is during the day, and it is at a time when we earn those resources that I have mentioned earlier.

So it comes as no surprise that I want to discuss with you the quality of your life at work. In other words, your work style!

Ask yourself, "do I enjoy my work?". Now ask yourself are you happy with the answer you gave yourself? If your answer was a very positive one that you were very happy with, then you don't need to be here! However, if that was not your answer, then we have lots to talk about.

What I want you to do today is to gain an awareness of how you spend that particular 8 hours of your day. With awareness, we are able to make change, and that change is very much up to us as individuals. What you change, or consolidate becomes your work style. Lets look at some other factors.

## **Personal Style at Work**

A very important, and obvious, factor is the kind of person you are and how you interact with your colleagues. Are you easy to get along with? Are you cooperative, or are you difficult? How do you respond to demands made upon you at work? How do you react to stress? And this is an even harder question to answer: do people avoid you at work? Why?

There have been countless studies that have shown that work is more productive and more efficient if everyone gets along! Further, the participants in these studies report that their sense of satisfaction and enjoyment of work is significantly enhanced when everyone gets along!

Obviously, you have complete and utter control on the kind of person that you choose to be at work. The choice is yours, so think about it.

## **Work Culture**

Another significant factor that affects the quality of your workstyle is in the culture of the workplace that you're working in. The workplace culture is that thing that is reflected in the attitudes and values of the people at work. We have all had the unpleasant experience of working in areas that have low morale, bitchiness between staff, alienation of management and so on. This is an example of a very bad work culture.

There are various kinds of work culture, and I am sure that in our working career we have all come across many of them. What is important though, is that we understand that we as individuals make up that particular, unique culture.

There are some variables that do affect work culture specifically. One is the attitude of management, which is just as important as the attitude of support staff. Another, the environment that we physically work in. And of course, another is the kind of work we do (or industry we work in).

What is important is that all of these variables can be influenced by individuals. Of course that influence can vary depending on the factor, but collectively all culture is degenerative behaviour of individuals.

I would like you to ask yourself, "what in your work culture needs changing?", and "what can you do to bring about that change?". These are very important questions, because they address tough issues. But remember, we are talking about a very important one third of your life.

## **Training and Development**

A significant factor in your workstyle is your actual skill base and the level of confidence you have regarding it. Did you know that most people are more likely to be successful at job interviews when they demonstrate high levels of confidence, good personality and enthusiasm, rather than their experience, skills and job knowledge!

Training and development obviously give you an enhanced skill base, but it also enhances your confidence in your own ability to perform work. Are you happy with your skills? Are you confident? The answer here is also important.

Many years ago there was a time when you gained training in particular skill, and then went out and exercised that skill. There was no need for further retraining. There was no need for skill enhancement. You had it all. Those days are now gone. Whether we like it or not, technology and the rapid change of that technology now means that we can never have the complacency of the past, but rather, work skills are a continual process of skill development and training.

But in training, let's not forget other skills. People skills. How do you conduct yourself at work? How do you deal with pressure? Do you have empathy? Are you aware of the subtle processes of communication?

## **Workload And Perception**

Well, it will come as no surprise that one other factor that affects your workstyle is the actual amount of work you have to do through the day. There is a big difference between a mountain and a molehill. Unfortunately, we do not always have control of the amount of work required of us, but we do have control of how it affects us.

Stress, is a matter of interpretation. What is stressful for one person is not always stressful for another. The mechanism that determines what we find stressful and what we do not, is called perception. How we perceive our work is determined by our life experience, and our choice.

We literally can choose to see something as stressful or not. We can see the experience as positive or negative. We can consider the glass as half full or half empty. The point is that we have a choice on how our workload affects us. Whether the glass is half full or half empty does not affect the volume of water, but it certainly does affect how we feel about it. The same applies to the workload we have. Whether we are busy or not, how we see it determines how it affects us.

## **Quality Control**

Quality Control is often thought of in the context of manufactured goods. However, it actually applies to all things that are produced by work. Services are an example of this. So I am going to talk you about how your workstyle will affect the quality of your work.

The quality of your work is just as important as the quality of the next product you buy. An obvious example of work quality not working is the mistake. You know, when you do something that you should not have done. Mistakes can be good and bad, of course, but for this example we are just talking about the bad ones.

The point is are you detecting your mistakes when you make them, and are you taking steps to not repeat them?

Product knowledge is also an important aspect of quality control. Do you know your job? What aspect of your job don't you know? What steps have you taken to improve your knowledge?

Good old-fashioned service is another issue in quality control. Are you helpful? Are you interested in the person you are dealing with? Are you providing minimum standards of service or maximum standards of service?

Remember that most of the people who will be visiting your firms will be under some sort of emotional stress. It may be a divorce issue, workers compensation, Administrative Appeals Tribunal, Family Court, whatever. The chances are high that they will be looking to your firm and its staff for support, guidance, reassurance and emotional security. Your manner in greeting them, dealing with their matter, understanding their instructions and clarifying issues is very important to them. And because of their distress, they will probably not appreciate the service that you are giving them, but will notice if they do not get good service.

So, as you can see, there are many aspects of quality control in work, and it is your responsibility to ensure that you provide that quality control. Of course the best way to ensure that you maintain quality control is to incorporate it into your workstyle.

**EXERCISE:** *Form into Groups of 4. On some paper, make a list of all the common types of mistakes that are committed in the office. When you have done that we will make a list on the whiteboard. We will look at ways to solve them. We will look at the costs involved in fixing mistakes.*

**Next.** *Make a list of the common kinds of activities in the office which require corporate knowledge ie you have to know what's going on. When you have done that we will make a list on the whiteboard.*

**Now,** *Lets identify all the mistakes that relate to lack of corporate knowledge. We will make a list of that on the whiteboard too.*

*What have you observed in this exercise? Discuss.*

## **Workstyle Vs Lifestyle**

We have been discussing workstyle as a form of lifestyle at work. But it is important also to recognise that sometimes workstyle and lifestyle can conflict. That conflict can be significant or insignificant. There are steps that you can take to minimise the conflict between workstyle and lifestyle.

The steps that you take will depend on your individual lifestyle and workstyle, but with a little bit of detachment and a good hard think, you will find that there are a number of ways of compromise that will allow you to minimise that conflict.

I would also suggest that workstyle and lifestyle should be the same thing, just different tasks. That is, your approach should be the same. You should be the same person in whatever role you are playing whether at home or at work. You live your lifestyle, you should live your workstyle. The important thing to be aware of is that you are still the same person.



**EXERCISE:** *form into the same group of four. Discuss these questions amongst the group. What are the differences between your workstyle and your lifestyle? Why are there differences? Should there be differences? What are the common factors between your workstyle and your lifestyle? What does this say about you as a person? Be prepared to provide one observation to be listed on the whiteboard.*

## **Recognise Change In Your Work**

I should also mention that our workstyle can be affected by changes at work, and therefore, it is important to be able to recognise change at work. There are a wide range of reasons why work changes, and I am sure that you can think of many of them, so let's discuss a few really obvious ones.

**TECHNOLOGY:** A rather obvious choice, would you not agree? Technological change has always been a significant factor in changing the nature of work. The most obvious example is computerisation in the office. You only have to think of how quickly the typing pool vanished off the face of the planet to understand how computerisation has affected things.

**SOCIAL CHANGE:** even more influential than technology, social change is the single most powerful influence on the nature of work. It was only a few hundred years ago that the occupation of wiggery was one of the most lucrative businesses to have. The use of wigs in the courts of Europe and Britain was extensive. The cost of a wig was enormous and an essential fashion requirement. Yet now it is a curiosity of an industry and definitely not a lucrative business.

Legislation is also a factor in social change. Examples of this are EEO, Sexual Harassment, Occupational Health and Safety, and Unfair Dismissal.

**PROPAGANDA:** the writing of the book, *The Female Eunuch*, was the beginning of the feminist revolution. In its day it was considered radical and risqué. Yet its publication led to a significant change in the thinking of the role of women in the work place. This in turn, brought about a change in the nature of work. Prior to feminism, women entered the workforce temporarily before they had children and raised a family. Because of this, women were assigned menial tasks that did not require corporate knowledge and skill development was not invested in them due to the transient nature.

Now, this situation no longer applies. Career development is based on the individual's effort rather than their sex. Although, some may argue the opposite.

**ECONOMIC:** Sometimes there can be economic factors that affect the nature of work. Forty years ago in the single income family was extremely common, if not the norm. Over the last 40 years, according to propaganda produced in the media, our standard of living has improved to the point that now dual income families are common if not the norm. In other words, in order to maintain standards of living, usually both partners have to work. This has brought about a change in the culture of work and expectations of work.

Sometimes the nature of work changes when we have the cumulative effect of several factors happening at once. Today we have more people working part-time than ever before. Today we have less people working and those people are working longer hours. This is the effect of economic change, social change and governmental policy.

But lets look at the Micro level. What happens on a day-to-day basis that affects your work?

**EXERCISE:** Form into groups of two. Discuss the following questions. What are the factors that influence your work and how you do it? Do you have any control over those factors? If yes, why? If no, why? Explain your answers to these questions to your partner in this exercise. We will list them on the whiteboard.

### **Adaptability & Flexibility**

In this part of the discussion I really just want to remind you that it is important to be adaptable and flexible in your workstyle. As we have just discovered, change takes place at work and we cannot afford to be complacent. Your workstyle may be quite appropriate at one point in time, but later in time it may be overtaken by events, policy or technology.

Part of being adaptable and flexible is having the attitude to go with it. A closed mind is rarely adaptable and flexible. But it is a distinct disadvantage!

Having awareness of the need to be adaptable and flexible is half the task. Ask yourself, "Am I a concrete person in my thinking?", why?

## Protestant Work Ethic

There is a very popular kind of workstyle in this country, which is called the Protestant Work Ethic. This is the description of those people that have a particular style of working that is dictated to them by the way they were raised. Some people work to the simple contract that if they simply do their job they have fulfilled their commitments and their work and their obligation ceases at this point. This is a very naive approach to work.

Of a similar vein is the ostrich approach, where you bury your head in the sand and hope for the best.

In order to be successful in your work, have a workstyle, which is successful and fulfilling, and to cope with changes in work as they occur, both at micro and macro level, you must be aware and forward-looking. There is no room for complacency here. Taking a naive approach to work in today's modern working environment is foolhardy. A work Protestant ethic is an antique concept that is out of sync with modern society and significantly hampers the performance in the prospects of an employee. Simply put, it is a very short-term way of looking at things. We have to be more street wise.

**EXERCISE:** *form into the same groups of 4. Identify what you think it is the culture of your office. Identify the corporate attitudes and values of your office. Explain how these corporate attitudes and values affect how the work is done.*

*Now, identify what ways you could possibly change the culture of your office. What are the obstacles to this task? Brainstorm amongst yourselves with ways to bring about change to the culture of an office. Be prepared to identify some of these for the whiteboard.*

## Limitations

Let me explain a very important concept. Most people do not complete or attempt a task because they do not believe that they can do so. Their judgment is often not based on a true account of their ability, but rather, based upon their perception of what their ability is.

One of the most common tasks that I carry out in therapy is convincing people not to impose limitations upon themselves. Think about this, "what are all the limitations that you impose upon yourself?"

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Limitations are a process of judgement that is influenced by confidence, perception of others, fear of failure, fear of rejection.

Think about the first time you learnt to drive a car. What was your perception of your driving skills? How do they compare with your perception of your driving skills now (Who is making a joke now rather than addressing the problem? Ask yourself why?).

**EXERCISE:** *Lets compile a list on the whiteboard of examples where people impose limitations upon themselves. Are the limitations reasonable? Necessary? Avoidable?*

This next section is an Awareness Exercise. We are going to look at how factors outside our normal perception affect our work and influence the way we do our work.

## Questions

- Who has heard of the World Trade Organisation? What does it do? What do we care?
  
- Who had heard of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI)? What does it mean to us?
  
- What are UN treaties? What do they do?
  
- Which western country has signed less treaties with the UN than any other?
  
- Is there an increase in gun related crime? How do you know? Where did you get your information from?
  
- Is divorce on the increase? How do you know? Where did you get your information from?

11.

**EXERCISE:** *lets identify the things that influence our work and our behaviour at work. Divide into groups of 4. Compile a list. We will put that list on the whiteboard. When we have the list, we will look why these things influence us.*

## Summary

As we have seen, your workstyle is affected by a number of factors. Those factors are broad and varied. We know some of them:

- Personal Style (you as a person)
- Work Culture (How everyone relates to each other)
- Training & Development (Our skill base)
- Workload & Perception (Are we busy or is this just a bad dream)
- Quality control (Doing it right)
- Perception of Change (Did I see it coming?)
- Adaptability & Flexibility (Says it all)
- Work Ethics (Doing the right thing)
- Self Limitation (I can't do this!)

Fortunately, you have influence on a broad range of those factors. More importantly, you have the ability to ensure that your work is more than just reward or remuneration.

The most important task of this whole workshop has been to make you aware of the fact that you can have a work style at work. Now you need to be proactive and start making change in your style of work, at work.

Questions? Discussion? Comments?