Maximizing Productivity

How to "Do Less and Accomplish More"

By Gabriel Lawson

Challenge

Times are tough! The economy threatens our corporate profitability. As profits, jobs, and budgets shrink, you're looking for every advantage to be successful! Chances are you're being asked to do more with less—but how?

Instead of working harder, try doing less; that's right, you can maximize productivity and sharpen execution by learning the art of *doing less and accomplishing more*! New research presents us with data to reap major productivity gains—if we act on that information!

Reward Proper Behavior

Myth: Working harder produces more!

The 'Fatigue Factor' shows that working 60-hour weeks for 2 months yields the same productivity as working 40-hour weeks for 2 months. Even worse, working 60-hour weeks for 3 months yields an average productivity of only
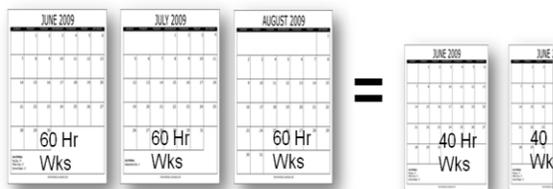
19.5 hours. Can an organization really afford this type of productivity? Henry Ford learned that 5-day workweeks yielded the same productivity as 6 and 7-day workweeks; equal production for less expense. Extensive studies prove the 'Fatigue Factor' applies even more so for today's 'knowledge workers'.

Lesson: It's easy to reward the wrong behavior.

We reward effort because it's the most visible. Efficiency and effectiveness get much better

results, but they're harder to recognize. Real results come from a focus on efficiency (going faster & maintaining quality) and effectiveness (going in the right direction). We routinely reward behaviors that undermine effectiveness; effort is only one example.

Action: Assess 'bad' behaviors and identify 'desired' behaviors.

Rewarding the proper behavior means figuring

out what 'bad' behaviors are being rewarded and what 'good' behaviors need rewarding. Start rewarding the right behaviors & watch your organization's effectiveness increase; just imagine how much better you'll sleep!

Effectiveness Step 1: Clearly identify 'what' you want to achieve.

The 'effectiveness pyramid' is a five-step process guaranteed to increase effectiveness & can be applied to any type of activity: a project, process, etc. Step one identifies *what* needs to be accomplished. What needs to be done to build a more effective organization: you must recognize *bad* behaviors & identify the *desired* behaviors.
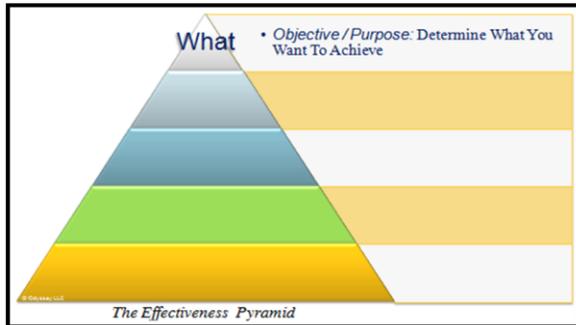
Educate to Correct Misconceptions and Establish Expectations

Myth: IQ is the best indicator of success.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is a much better indicator and unlike IQ, EQ can be taught, developed and matured—and by quite a lot! Imagine turning average performers into star performers.

Positive emotions stimulate the cognitive areas of the brain—resulting in better problem solving, decision making, creativity, and intuition.

Negative emotions stimulate the reptilian brain: the 'fight or flight' part of the brain. On average, our reptilian brain consumes 65% to 70% of our brain energy. That's good for cave men, but not knowledge workers who need to be in the cognitive brain.

The right human processes can easily shift brain energy to the cognitive areas of the brain. Research shows that positive or negative emotions quickly redirect the brain's energy. Our human processes—how we interact and behave—are constantly influencing our brain functions; helping or hurting our productivity as knowledge workers.

Lesson: Our human processes are critical to productivity.

Human processes are the foundation that supports our business processes. 80% of process implementation is the cultural adoption of the new processes. The cultural behaviors of an organization—the human processes—will dictate whether business processes are adopted. For example, in a finger

pointing organization, planning & accountability processes will be difficult to implement.

Action: Educate and set expectations.

It's important to clearly set expectations on the type of human processes that will be encouraged and will not be tolerated—and why.

Action: Build rewards that map to your desired behaviors.

B.F. Skinner's theory of behaviorism is simple; people behave according to how they are rewarded. Determine how to reward the right behaviors and build those rewards into your infrastructure: appraisals, ratings, raises, etc.

Effectiveness Step 2: Identify 'how' you will achieve your objective.

The second step in the 'effectiveness pyramid' is figuring out how you are going to accomplish your objective. How do you create an 'effectiveness' oriented organization? You set expectations and reward the desired behaviors.

Effectiveness Step 3: Identify 'who' will accomplish the plan and communicate 'what & how'.

Once you clearly understand what you want to accomplish (your objective) and how you are going to accomplish it (your strategy), it needs to be communicated and the right people assembled—the 'who' part of the

'effectiveness pyramid'. When it comes to human process there is only one answer as to who will accomplish the plan: everyone.

What	• *Objective / Purpose:* Determine What You Want To Achieve
How	• *Strategy:* Determine How To Accomplish Your Objective / Purpose
Who	• *Leadership:* Assemble & Rally the Right People

The Effectiveness Pyramid

Practice Effectiveness Techniques

Myth: Practice makes perfect!

If it's easy to reward the wrong behavior, it's just as easy to *practice* the wrong behaviors.

Lesson: Practicing the 'wrong' behavior doesn't get you better.

Practicing a *bad* golf swing gets you a *bad* golf swing. Practicing *effort* doesn't result in *efficiency* or *effectiveness*.

Lesson: The right practice comes from independent observation and feedback.

If you don't know what you're doing wrong, you likely won't be able to fix it. Receiving the right feedback and instruction creates the right practice. Don't practice what's wrong; fix it and advance to the next level!

Action: Create an effectiveness initiative and drive it throughout the organization.

Want a more *efficient* and *effective* organization? Then make it important! Require every individual to put effort into becoming more efficient or effective. Make it a goal. Make it part of their review. Make it a part of their compensation. Expect it and reward it. Envision the productivity gains if *everyone works at being more efficient and effective.*

Effectiveness Step 4: 'Do' activities that map to your strategy.

If an activity doesn't map to your 'how', why spend time doing it? Only do activities that map to your strategy! In the example of building a more effective organization, allowing bad behaviors to continue to be rewarded causes more work, missed deliverables, & poor execution. Isn't it time to change & take charge?
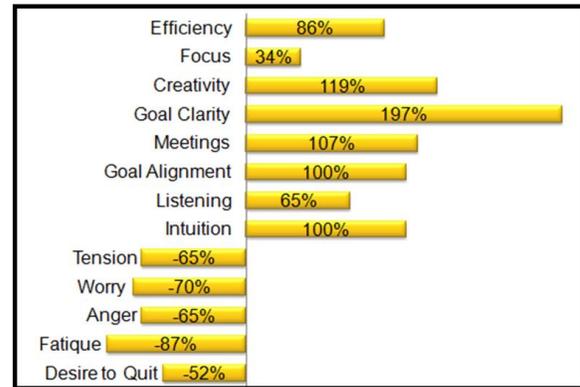
Effectiveness Step 5: 'Watch' what is and isn't working.

Without constant feedback new behaviors seldom turn into habits of second nature. Without feedback, it's too easy to fall back into old habits. Feedback allows the right practice to be embraced.

The Effectiveness Pyramid

Summary:

Here's how one company's focus on EQ improved their organization:

*Assess what you want to **reward**, **educate** people on what you want, & **practice** the 'effectiveness pyramid'.*

Apply the five steps of the 'effectiveness pyramid' to everything you do! Clearly understand *what* you are trying to do, *how* you plan to do it, and *who* should be involved. Then *do* only those activities that map to your strategy and most importantly, *watch* what happens and make modifications when necessary.

The 'effectiveness pyramid' can be applied to any activity, not just modifying the behaviors of an organization. Follow them and I guarantee you'll start seeing the benefits of *doing less and accomplishing more!*

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