

Know & Do publishes monthly *think papers* for its subscribers and clients highlighting different issues that promote the philosophy of '*knowing+doing=being*'. Our approach is: if you cannot define where you want to **BE**, how can you **KNOW** your plans are correct and what you are **DOING** will help you reach your goal?

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Achieve More for Less through Great Work

Think Paper No. 3; Series 1

Recent austerity measures have meant that the mantra of *more for less* has become the ubiquitous byword in any funding or commissioning opportunity in the public sector. The fanciful notion of doing 'less for more' in the private sector is no longer a reality, if indeed it ever was. The bottom line is that overall the books don't quite balance in the public sector and anyone involved in this sector is having to adapt to increased expectations being achieved through significantly less resource.

The first wave of austerity measures reversed the trend of increased expenditure in the public sector to increase overall prosperity. The measures cut deep into the budgets of many councils and forced much debate over what was a core or non-core service and therefore protected. There was much posturing on both sides of the political fence and claims and counter claims. One thing that did emerge quite strongly was the fact that many programmes, funded through additional monies, had not produced credible evidence of outcomes for the extra investment.

We have personally witnessed this firsthand during many evaluations and reviews we have undertaken of different projects. New commissioning structures and payment by results will make it harder to operate without better evaluation and an understanding of outcomes. There are countless examples from both community and private providers where public money has not produced the results expected from large IT contracts, to education contracts, housing redevelopment and public health interventions to highlight a few.

One question that has frequently come up from subsequent reviews of such programmes was not so much was there a better way of doing this but should this have been done at all?

Producing more efficient ways of doing the wrong thing does not improve the situation it only makes you more efficient at being wrong. Our last Think Paper¹ encouraged readers to think through and write a personal mission statement. Mission statements are used to guide a person or organisation on their journey. However, if you're on the wrong path running faster down it will only take you somewhere you don't want to be quicker.

So, the first step in achieving more for less is reflecting on what you or your organisation want to achieve and whether this is something that is still viable. Recently we have encouraged several charities and social enterprises to undertake a complete shut down review. This has focussed them on what are they committed to legally and morally and what would they need to do, and by when, in order to cease trading. This also involved going back over why they are doing what they do and whether they have veered off course.

Many report finding the exercise quite liberating as they now clearly understand what they are committed to and what order decisions need to be made in. Several identified things that they are doing that they wish they weren't, and the drain on resources such projects bring. When we lack motivation we procrastinate more and bring less energy to a project, normally reducing its efficiency and therefore impact. We can do our best to hide it but just like in close relationships, it's quite obvious to the other person.

Michael Bungay Stanier is a Canadian Business Coach who talks about three types of work that we typically fall into a habit of doing: Bad work; Good work; and Great work².

Bad Work – is a waste of time, energy and life. Doing it once is one time too many. It shows up as bureaucracy, interminable meetings and outdated processes that waste everyone's time.

Good Work – is the familiar, useful, productive work you do – and you likely do it well. Its efficient focussed profitable work that delivers next quarter's returns. It ranges from engaging and interesting to the more mundane. You recognise the latter by its necessity although you are happy to spend time doing it.

Great Work – is work that is meaningful to you, has an impact and makes a difference. It inspires, stretches, and provokes. It connects and resonates with your personal mission and values. It puts you in what Mihály Csíkszentmihályi terms a *flow state*³ - a state of focussed motivation and concentration. It can be challenging

¹ Why does "motivation" fail to last? (Paper 2, Series 1) <http://knowanddo.com/resources>

² Stainer; Michael Bungay (2010) *Do more great work*. Workman Publishing, New York.

³ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flow_\(psychology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flow_(psychology))

because it's new and requires change and innovation. It can be deeply rewarding, both personally and financially though.

He challenges companies and individuals to map out their current mix by drawing a circle and then slicing it into pieces of a 'work pie' making each slice represent a percentage of time and effort spent in each area of work bad, good and great (see figure 1 for example). He then asks them to write down two examples of each type of work in each segment. This helps to make it clear to yourself and others just what you refer to as bad, good or great work.

Where are you now?

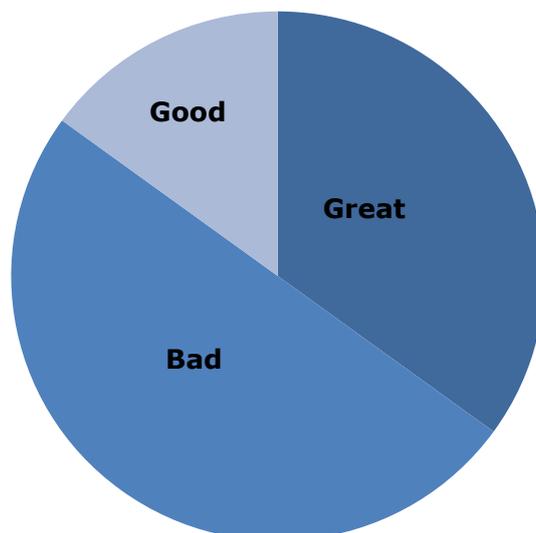


Figure 1. Example of a completed Work Pie

The initial pie represents where you are now, if you're not happy with it then think about and draw out your ideal mix. What would this look, sound or feel like i.e. how would you know when you or your team are doing bad or great work? Very few people set out deliberately to do 'bad' work, but with a few subtle wrong choices they end up there by default over time. Check back over your diary for the last week, last fortnight and the last month to see if particular weeks had any stand out differences and if so why? Think carefully and honestly about the habits and work patterns that have got you to where you are? If that's somewhere you don't want to be then change it; do something different right now that takes you a step in the right direction and keep taking further steps until you're back on the right path.

Knowing + Doing = Being



If you spend more time doing great work and good work then you'll inevitably end up doing the work better because when we have levels of interest we find a way to make something happen. The late Steve Jobs spent his time pursuing great work; he had little interest in mediocrity. Interestingly, although he was thrown off course, including being removed from the board at Apple (the company he co-founded), he eventually found his way back by doing great work.

Like any manufacturing company they completed LEAN⁴ reviews of their manufacturing process but fundamentally, the biggest difference between Apple and its competitors was focussing on producing great products (highly desirable products that people wanted and once they had them they wanted more). Other competitors produced MP3 players e.g. Microsoft produced the Zune, but they did not had the look and feel of Apple's IPOD, nor its selling power. Interestingly, Apple is one of the most profitable companies in the world and is known for not discounting and keeping high margins. So great work pays.

The moral of the story then is if you want to achieve more for less then do more GREAT WORK. Keep focussed on doing as much great work as possible and by default you'll find many ways of achieving more for less to keep you doing the work you love.

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⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lean_manufacturing