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TOP SECRET

The Powerful Secret to Increasing Productivity

Most economists tend to agree that productivity will remain sluggish into 2018, with no signs of marked improvement. And, although unemployment remains low, the average annual growth in output per worker has actually fallen. Yet, the TUC calls Britain's long hours culture a national disgrace – so aren't people busy enough already? Probably! But clearly busyness isn't having the positive impact on productivity that one might expect, therefore, isn't it about time that organisations started to help their people to work smarter, not harder? Herein is the secret.

Indeed, as time scarcity has become a modern world phenomenon, people appear to have simultaneously adopted a degree of pride in being busy; a way of communicating to others that they are important and contributing to life in general. In part, busyness has been provoked by around-the-clock connectivity, yet it seems to be exacerbated by people compelled to justify and safeguard their place in a volatile and uncertain world, whatever the price.

However this association between being busy and being productive is misguided and can have a damaging effect on people in organisations and ultimately on their productivity.

Busy people spend most of their time in 'doing' mode. They might find it difficult to delegate and over-value their ability to multi-task. Far from being productive, this divides their attention and compromises their priorities. Productive people are more frequently found in a 'learning' mode. They have clarity about what they want to achieve and how they will achieve it, they are focused on their priorities, utilise the resources around them, and question their assumptions.

This ability to move between 'doing' and 'learning' appears to be a key differentiator between busy people and productive people. When you are not too busy, you create time to step back and **reflect** on what you are doing, what is happening around you, and in what better ways you can achieve your goals.

According to the CIPD, this ability to reflect is about learning to pay attention (to oneself), facing personal assumptions, noticing patterns, changing perceptions, and transforming these insights into strategies and actions for personal and organisational growth. Furthermore, they describe the practice of reflection as the act of expressing those thoughts on a systematic basis.

So is reflection the secret to increasing productivity?

Research carried out by Francesco Gino, Gary Pisano, and their team confirmed that **spending fifteen minutes reflecting at the end of the day can increase performance by up to 25%**, which would have an astounding impact on productivity.¹

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The reflective process helps to increase self-awareness, regulate emotions, and improve judgement. Taking time-out to reflect helps people to make sense of situations, understand their choices, prioritise, find solutions to problems, and generate new ideas.

The more able people are to reflect and learn from their actions, the more empowered and resilient they will be in the face of diverse and chaotic conditions. And the more people who challenge the normal practices and assumptions of the organisation, the more innovative and agile the organisation will become. Seemingly, in a VUCA environment, the ability to reflect is not just useful - it could also be an organisational imperative.

How can reflection be incorporated into organisational life?

There are many ways in which people can practice reflection - from simply jotting down thoughts, or writing a journal at the end of the day, to using a more analytical approach such as the Gibbs cycle. However, in our 'busy' lives, establishing a reflective discipline can be challenging and as a consequence, in order to break existing patterns and establish new habits, people often benefit from the support of a Coaching approach. This can take several forms though.

Perhaps the most obvious is that of the Executive Coach who can facilitate the reflective process in a safe, confidential and goal-oriented way that enables the other person to gradually build reflection into their daily rituals. This works best for Senior Leaders as it can combine developing reflective habits with other business and development benefits.

In order for reflection to become an organisational ritual, organisations can benefit from introducing internal coaching functions that make Coaches easily accessible to a much wider audience. By doing so the organisation sends a clear message about the value it places on a coaching process that concerns improving individual and organisational performance. This message challenges existing assumptions about presenteeism and busyness and creates new associations between reflection and improved performance and productivity. Organisations that adopt this approach open up reflective practice to many more Managers across the organisation and so it can be a highly cost effective option.

However, a third option that can have the greatest transformational effects on productivity across the whole organisation is to help make this 'the way we do things around here' by giving all Managers the tools to develop reflective practice in their everyday management style, not just for themselves but for their teams, and thereby for everyone. Simple, cost effective, development programmes like Notion's STAR® Manager can help organisations increase productivity within a matter of months and help support this level of improvement in productivity, performance and engagement levels in a sustainable way over many years.

So if the secret to increasing productivity is to find some time for reflection what are you going to do to become more productive? One action you can take now is to click here to view a short video about Reflective Practice (<https://www.BusinessCoaching.co.uk/reflection>).

1 Gino, F., Pisano, G.P., et al. (2016) Making Experience Count: The Role of Reflection in Individual Learning, Harvard Business School

Notion is a global expert in behaviour change and can support you across all three of these areas. So whether you need to support a Senior Leader, set up an internal coaching function from scratch or want to galvanise your entire workforce, Notion can help you to develop the skills that will embed the practice of reflection into the psyche of the organisation. For more information about any of these services get in touch with us here <https://www.BusinessCoaching.co.uk/reflection>. Alternatively, call us for an informal chat on +44 (0)1926 889 885.

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