



turning potential into performance

Traa dy Liooar: Time Enough©

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There are an enormous number of managers who have retired on the job. ~Peter Drucker

There is more to life than increasing its speed. ~Mohandas K. Gandhi

Learning to be aware in the moment takes no extra time, . . . awareness simply rounds out each moment, makes it more full, breathes life into it. ~ Jon Kabat-Zinn

I recently returned from a long-overdue, two-week vacation in the UK with my family, on the Isle of Mann to be precise. I didn't realize, however, until midway through just how long overdue.

I had intentionally suspended all ways to be wired, thus freeing my attention. It wasn't until about day six, however, that I realized, "Wow, I've not thought about work at all."

At that particular moment of awareness, I was a bit startled, since I love my work. Yet in that moment my life did not crumble nor was it frantic nor--horrors--did I determine it useless. Rather, I found myself mildly amused about this phenomenon of 'not working,' and 'not being productive' and at my surprise that it didn't bother me. Since I routinely encounter jibes at my penchant for working, I decided to go with it to see what would occur.

As we took in all that the beautiful Isle of Mann had to give up, we began to feel the rhythm, the pace of the Manx way of life: Traa dy Liooar (pronounced 'tray da lure') or, 'time enough.' Yes, there was time enough; time that fed us—great seafood and tasty biscuits, time that connected us to the beauty of the Isle floating in the Irish Sea, to the people there, to one another as family, time that immersed us in stillness and quiet and clean air.

What does this have to do with work? Mine and yours?

In *Follow This Path*, Coffmann and Gonzalez-Molina state, "more than forty-two independent Gallup studies indicate that approximately 75 percent of employees in most companies are not engaged in work . . . and disengaged employees cost companies hundreds of millions of dollars annually."

Seventy-five percent of employees not engaged in work—amazing! Could any of us be included in that percentage? Why are folks disengaged? Disconnected?

Could it be that as Americans we are so steeped in the pioneer mindset of needing to push ahead toward the uncharted goal of a better future that we perpetuate the round-the-clock workplace atmosphere with its inordinate, constant focus on productivity?

Could it be that our focus seems justified as we move in the competitive global economy, sacrificing the time to reflect that fuels us—personal connection, awareness, and planned vacations— all in hopes of a better quality of life?

While Americans *are* among the most productive people in the world, creating nearly \$64,000 of wealth per person per year, it comes at a huge cost: an engaged, connected, aware workforce. Specifically, Americans work nearly 2,000 hours a year on average and *take only an average of 10.2 days of paid vacation a year*, while our counterparts in Australia, Canada and Japan work about 2.5 weeks less, Brazilians and Brits about five weeks less, and the French more than 7 weeks less. The Germans work least or 12.5 weeks less than we Americans, according to the International Labor Office. That's two and a half months difference!

What's the cost of this constant push? We're growing increasingly disconnected from one another and ourselves, disengaged from our work. We lose our zip, our focus, our power. Our health suffers from the stress. Over time we burnout or leave; or worse, we're present in body but not in spirit—disengaged, drained, dulled. Creativity and energy wanes. Ultimately the cost influences the bottom line in a given quarter or year, though its far broader impact is reflected in the meaning, or not, that we assign to 'work.'

Working fewer hours, I realize, does not ensure awareness or quality of life, which technically includes variables such as average life span, a sturdy healthcare system, education levels and gross domestic product in each country.

And, it's unclear whether those from other cultures are more 'connected' to their lives than we are just because they work fewer hours. However, is the 'cost' to Americans working so many hours worth it if we become disconnected, disengaged, *unable to be present in living our lives in each moment* because we're preoccupied with productivity?

I like what U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao had to say at the AEI Conference in 2004: 'a standard of living cannot be measured simply in terms of the goods and services we can purchase. It is also measured in how much time people have available to do the things they love, with the people they love. In other words, hours **not** spent on the job are also important to quality of life.'

Two things will be increasingly essential as we move forward in the 21st century: attention training or 'showing up' while at work and time spent away from work. Both require ongoing practice.

A quality standard of living would seem to *require, even demand* time for reflection, time for restoration. Learning to paying attention, to be present is an essential skill to cultivate engagement with work and home life. It's in taking time each day, even a few

minutes, to still one's self and the inherent busyness of the mind, that one steps outside the flow of time where an awareness of 'what is' at any given moment has even the chance of being noticed.

And, of course, time spent away from work, involved in fullness of one's life is key whether it's an afternoon at a ballgame, lunch on the patio, or brisk afternoon walk. You see, prior to my vacation I didn't *feel* particularly 'disconnected or disengaged' in my life or work. Yet as we drove through the beautiful hills of the isle, shrieking with laughter as we rounded the hairpin turns, I experienced deep refreshment at that moment with people I love. Traa dy Liooar: time enough. That's quality of life.