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Introduction

THE AIM OF THIS BOOK

This book is a simple guide to overcoming the problems that get in the way at work. It therefore covers the age-old problem of how to fit all the things we have to do into twenty four hours, how to handle those knotty problems that always crop up, how to store things so that we can find them when we need them and at the end of the day - how to switch off.

It is not, however, a book of management theory nor a work of psychology or sociology; while borrowing some ideas from all these fields it is essentially a book based on everyday experience, written with a minimum of jargon and applying principles of common sense to everyday problems.

WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

The author has written this book for anybody who works in whatever field (and that can mean doing a job, running a voluntary organization, pursuing a hobby etc.). It will be particularly helpful to those people who have to organize a large part of their own work such as managers and supervisors in industry or commerce, people who run their own business or anybody who has to do more than a purely repetitive and mechanical job.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each of the eight chapters has the same structure. Every chapter:

- takes a theme (listed in the contents)
- outlines the key issues
- gives examples of how those issues affect work
- suggests ways of handling the issues, in some cases with examples of what happened when other people used the approach.

Each chapter is self-contained and can be read by itself, though they do of course relate to one another. Throughout the text you'll find symbols alerting you to key features, all of which are designed to help make your learning as effective - and enjoyable - as possible. The symbols used, and the features they alert you to are as follows:

At the beginning of each chapter

- © Indicates a list of objectives - key activities that you should be able to carry out when you have completed the chapter. You'll find a reminder at the end of each chapter to check back over this list.

Within each chapter

- 📄 Reminds you that we are about to ask you to carry out a written activity - either in the text itself or, if you prefer, in a separate notebook. We strongly recommend that you find someone to discuss your answers with - perhaps someone who is also using this book. We'll refer to this person as your adviser.
- 🗨️ Indicates that we are asking you to do something. This may simply be to think about an issue or idea, or it may involve you in a practical activity, say, recording your progress at work over several days. The same symbol is also used against checklists, which you may wish to cut out or photocopy and refer to in future.
- eg Indicates an example - say, of someone else's work methods or of a real-life problem that someone has encountered.

You may not find it easy to discuss your own effectiveness at first -but once you've broken the ice you'll find it well worthwhile. So try to find someone you already feel at ease with, and aim to keep your discussion as informal as possible. The activity on page 11 will be a good point at which to try out this approach for the first time.

At the end of each chapter

☞ Suggests a personal agenda for action - a set of resolutions to put what you have learned into practice. This is a reminder that the book is about practical, attainable changes in working habits. One way of recording your agenda is as an 'action plan' - a list of targets with a date for the attainment of each. Here are some typical entries from one such plan:

- Reduce overtime costs by 40 per cent by year end.
- Eliminate stock discrepancies by improving the system of stock control by Christmas break
- Improve the understanding of their job among my four supervisors by preparing job descriptions with them by Friday
- Get flow of copy to the composing room on agreed schedules by end of this month

There is also a summary of objectives for the whole book on page 7. If you decide that you have not achieved what you set out to do:

- discuss the objectives with someone - preferably your adviser. Have you interpreted these correctly? Have you set out to do too much too soon?
- work through the relevant section of text again, taking particular note of the practical steps we recommend
- above all, persist: if the objective is one you value the effort you put into achieving, it will be well worthwhile.

In addition, each chapter ends with:

- a short 'signpost' list of related material in other chapters.
- a list of possible sources of help that you might use in your own workplace.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

Use this list as an overview. If your time is limited you may find it helpful to take chapters in order of priority and work through them in that order. If you have only very limited time, select just the chapters whose objectives match your immediate needs and concentrate first on these. You can then return to further chapters when the opportunity arises.

CHAPTER 1 - YOU AND YOUR JOB

- ⊙ After reading this chapter you will be able to:
- identify areas of your job in which you could develop further
 - use your job description effectively
 - outline the key result areas in your job
 - review your performance regularly.

CHAPTER 2 - THE RIGHT TASK AT THE RIGHT TIME

- ⊙ After reading this chapter you will be able to:
- review how you use your time at present
 - organize your use of time more effectively
 - identify ways in which you can avoid wasting time
 - achieve your time plans.

CHAPTER 3 - WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

- ⊙ After reading this chapter you will be able to:
- predict routine problems in your work
 - cope with unexpected problems
 - handle problems effectively.

CHAPTER 4 - YOU AND YOUR WORKPLACE

- ⊙ After reading this chapter you will be able to:
- identify the factors in your working environment, which can affect efficient working
 - suggest beneficial changes that could be made in your own environment
 - get such changes made.

CHAPTER 5 - WORKING WITH PEOPLE

- ⊙ After reading this chapter you will be able to:
- explain what makes a teamwork
 - delegate more effectively
 - identify which of your communication skills you would like to improve.

CHAPTER 6 - FOR EVERYTHING, A PLACE

- ⊙ After reading this chapter you will be able to:
- explain the importance of storing things systematically
 - organize the things you use at work
 - find things when you need them.

CHAPTER 7 - COPING WITH CHANGE

- ⊙ After reading this chapter you will be able to:
- identify the changes that are happening which affect the way we work
 - consider the key changes in your own work
 - make some changes yourself.

CHAPTER 8 - SWITCHING OFF

- © After reading this chapter you will be able to:
- pinpoint the sources of stress in your work
 - organize your work so that you can minimize stress
 - prepare a plan to lead a less stressful life
 - switch off!

1: you and your job

When you have completed this chapter you will be able to:	
☉	Identify areas of your job in which you could develop further
☉	Use your job description effectively
☉	Outline the key result areas in your job
☉	Rreview your performance regularly

INTRODUCTION

How often are you very busy, so busy you don't have time to stop and think? And don't you sometimes feel that you are not achieving all that you want, that the activity you are engaged in is in fact taking up all your time, perhaps even to the extent that it fails to lead to the results you want. This can happen at home, at work - anywhere where you are trying to achieve things, though for most of us it is at work that it probably matters most.

You may feel frustrated because you aren't achieving what you want to achieve without knowing *WHY*; you may know *why* but still not know *what* to do about it.

The key theme throughout the book, is how to make the *INPUTS* in your job that will achieve the *OUTPUTS* you require. This chapter starts our discussion about improving effective working by looking at the two key elements in the process, namely:

- you and
- your job

YOU

We are all used to analyzing ourselves - we do it when we apply for jobs in the form of a curriculum vitae (CV) or resume, a letter of application or in the job interview itself - but very often we stop looking at ourselves once we've got the job, maybe once the interview is over, the job offer received or the contract signed. After all, having focused so hard on getting the job, putting all our skill into proving how suitable we were for the post, we have now achieved our goal - we can relax!

But it is precisely at this moment that we should sharpen up our skills and apply them to the job in question; once the job application is behind us we come face-to-face with the demands of the job itself. Our application may have taken several weeks, or even months, but the job itself will usually involve us much longer, maybe for a very long time. It will determine how much time and money we have and if we perform effectively our life will be much easier and more satisfying. After all, our time is precious, our productive time even more so, to our employer, and to the wider world.

The problem is that what happens in a job application is essentially a backward look at ourselves. What is needed for effective performance is a forward look at where we are going and how we can get there.

You may have a CV or resume that you have used recently for a job application. Most people put this away after getting a job and forget about it until next time. It's at least as useful however, as a way of monitoring where you're going. When used in this way it is labeled *The Dynamic CV* to denote that it's continually changing (a reflection of you) in contrast to the static one which is only brought out and dusted down on special occasions.

The Dynamic CV

What do you bring to your work? You can start to compile your dynamic CV in the same way you write any CV- by listing things you've done (like jobs and courses), qualifications you've obtained, things you've achieved and so on. But these all provide the backward look. To look ahead we need to add:

- A list of your strengths, for example that you're good at devising systems.
- A list of your weaknesses, for example that you don't know as much as you'd like about how new technology affects your work.
- Your personal growth points, for example that you have the motivation, time and energy, to learn a foreign language and that this has all sorts of implications for the way you might develop your work and your leisure time.
- Where you want to go, for example that you would like to run your own department within two years.

Strengths

What are the things you are good at, the skills you bring to different situations, your personal assets? These will probably show up in the things you have achieved already.

Weaknesses

Where are you less competent than you would like to be? This might include things you dislike about yourself, or skills that you feel you might lack. They could be things that have held you back from achieving your goals.

A weakness is seen by many people as something negative about themselves; it can however also be helpful if we identify it and recognize it as an area for development,

In overcoming a weakness you can achieve a great leap forward in your work.

Personal Growth Points

These indicate ways in which you could develop, using the experience, skills and knowledge you have, or might soon acquire.

Where Do You Want To Go?

There is no point in identifying points for growth if you don't want to go in that direction. It is important to take your personal preferences into account. Acting effectively is very difficult if you (or someone else) are trying to push yourself in a direction you don't want to go!

You are now beginning to map out a plan for action. You might want to use this to:

- make your CV more forward looking when applying for another job
- to focus on your present work.

Now, complete the form 'Where are you going?' on the next page

 **Where are you going?**

Complete these statements to find out more about where you are going in your job

My strengths are: I can develop these further by: Do I want to do so?

My areas of weakness are: I can change them by: Do I want to do so?

How can I use my strengths to better effect?

Does changing my weak areas open up any possibilities?

My growth points are?

Where do I want to be in:

1 Year 3 Years 10 Years

If possible discuss your answers with an adviser.

Check

- How far your own view of your strengths and weaknesses corresponds to their view
- Whether you have been realistic about your aims potential

eg	Here's what one technical writer said
My strengths:	
	• I'm good at having ideas.
	• I'm good (and experienced) at turning ideas into products and at bringing order to a mass of ideas and material.
	• I'm good at devising systems.
	• I'm meticulous and careful in the jobs I do.
	• I'm good at presenting information to people in face-to-face situations too. I'm a good listener.
My weaknesses:	
	• I work slowly.
	• I'm not good at separating unimportant detail from crucial action. I underestimate the time I need to do a job.
	• I can't write in a literary style.
	I don't share work well and don't delegate easily.
My growth points are:	
	• In applying my knowledge and organizational skills to running a department.
	• In applying my skills to fields outside my technical area.
I therefor need to:	
	• Develop my managerial skills
	• Pace my work better.
Where I want to be:	
	• In six months I could hope to run my own department.
	• In one year I would like to have produced some material to a publishable standard.
<p>You are now beginning to map out a plan for action. You might want to use this to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make your CV / resume more forward looking when applying for another job • to focus on your present work 	

YOUR JOB

If asked what their job involves, many people would probably refer to their job description; if you have one, this section will help you to decide how useful it is. If you don't have one-the whole of this section could be useful both to yourself and to your employer. Even if you are self-employed, it's useful to sit down once in a while and to ask 'just exactly what is my job?'

A Poor Job Description

Many job descriptions are merely a list of things we're expected to do. This may be a useful starting point but it is not enough because:

- it doesn't help you sort out priorities
- it doesn't provide goals
- it doesn't indicate how you should evaluate your performance. In other words, it is written in terms of inputs not outputs.

A Good Job Description

A good job description looks at the 'what' of the job, not the 'how'. It is not an operations manual. An effective job description should have several distinct themes:

1. The purpose of the job
2. Key result areas
3. Measures of success
4. Ways of checking progress
5. In some jobs, a review period for the job description itself.

In a large organization, there may be more than one layer to a job description; there may well be a

general one that applies to all staff at a particular level, supplemented with more detailed ones for specific jobs.

On the following two pages are some examples of good job descriptions followed by more detailed notes about each of the five themes above.

eg

Job description for an administrative position

Position:

Center Administrator

Department:

Training Center, South East Region

Responsible to:

Training Manager, South East Region.

Overall Purpose of Job:

To provide admin. support for conducting the Center's training events; to run its accounting system and to provide secretarial services for the full-time and part-time staff of the Center.

Training Events:

- Receive enrolments for training events and issue joining instructions.
- Arrange venues and ensure that training aids are available as required.
- Receive reports and statistical information on training events.
- Maintain a record of all national and regional training events together with information on participants as required.

Financial Budgets:

- Review and process all invoices concerned with the Center's purchases.
- Maintain accounts records of all expenditure.
- Prepare monthly claims statistics and forms for submission to the Finance Department.
- Review and check all claims for payment from Associate and Consultant Trainers prior to settlement.
- Continuous review of actual expenditure against budget.

Administration:

- Type letters, handouts and course literature for the Center's full and part-time staff.
- Organize, develop and maintain the Center's filing system.
- Prepare and distribute mailings on the Center's events and activities.
- Order and maintain adequate stocks of stationery.

Relationships:

Maintenance of effective working relationships with the staff of the national and regional Training Departments, the Center's Consultant and Associate Trainers, other departments in the company which use the training facilities from time to time, the Finance Department and the Center's suppliers.

Deadlines to Meet:

- Ensure that joining instructions are notified to course participants at least ten days before the training event.
 - Render monthly financial and attendance returns according to schedule.
 - Ensure adherence to the provision of monthly claim statistics to the Company.
- Occasional Duties: Represent the Center at promotions and public events as requested by the Regional Training Manager.

eg

Job description for a managerial position

Role:

Factory Management.

Outline

Plans and achieves short- and long-term output levels required to meet customer demand through control of manufacturing resources and services.



- Plans and controls production resources to ensure that the required levels of output, meeting varying customer requirements and agreed quality standards, are achieved at minimum cost.
- Organizes purchasing and factory supply activities to obtain the economic sourcing and timely availability of materials to ensure production continuity.
- Directs and integrates production related engineering services to ensure the availability of efficient manufacturing facilities and resolve production problems.
Ensures that adequate manning levels are maintained and suitable manpower resources are recruited and trained within agreed budget. Reviews and introduces updated incentive payment schemes to ensure maximum utilization of the labor force.
- Becomes actively involved in the preparation of financial forecasts for the ongoing business major projects and new product introductions.
- Undertakes budgetary reviews to meet changing requirements and circumstances.
- Is involved in policy, planning, financial and organizational decisions to meet business objectives.
- Ensures that statutory and company regulations are observed.
- Becomes involved in industrial relations discussions and negotiations including appeals procedures at advanced stage.
- Determines requirements and obtains plant and tools to meet forecast customer demand.
- Coordinates the satisfactory introduction of new and modified products.
- Responsible for personnel management, including motivation, development and succession to maintain the operational effectiveness of the function.


Dimensions

Sales turnover	\$ / £
Output at cost	\$ / £
Workforce (total):	
Manual	
Administrative	
Value of materials	\$ / £
Stockholding (gross)	\$ / £
'Live' product types:	
Number of customers:	
Department budget	\$ / £
Subordinates	

The point about each of the job descriptions is that they are:

- Absolutely specific. A good job description avoids generalizations and vague references, It's better to err on the side of length than of brevity.
- Clearly set out. These descriptions have not been scribbled down in five minutes. Their writers have taken the trouble to plan them out for maximum clarity. Well-chosen headings enable us to locate specific points at a glance.
- Actively expressed. Note the verbs that have been used: review, type, direct, coordinate. An effective job description uses these 'hard' verbs in preference to 'soft' ones such as 'understand' or 'be aware of. Why? because active phrases express measurable, observable events, invaluable for monitoring and reviewing performance.

1. Job Purpose	
Jot down notes in answer to the following:	
	What is your company (or organization) about?
	What is the purpose of running the business?
	What is the purpose of your department within the business?
	What is the underlying purpose of your job?
	Why does it exist?
	What would happen if it did not exist?
2. Key Results Areas	
Note down:	
	Your roles
	Who you report to
	Who reports to you
	What budget or money you have to account for or have the power to spend
You should end up with a set of statements for each of your key results. Since these are so important, we discuss them further below.	
Your key results must relate to the goals of the business as a whole. You can classify them in terms of:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output: what you do 'to', 'for' or 'about' the goods or services with which your company or organization is involved. • Finance: budget, cost, profit and/or revenue responsibilities. • staff / employee relations. • Communication / liaison: what you need to do to get maximum support from people both inside and outside the organization. • Plant / building / equipment • Statutory requirements include health & safety, labor regulations • markets / customers / sales • Innovation 	
Key results	
eg	Here, as a guide, is a selection of key results from different jobs. Note that, as in the examples we gave earlier, they all start with an active verb, i.e. a word to describe what someone has to do.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adherence to production schedules. • Maintain effective liaison and communication with related departments in the company. • Monitor and control operating costs so that they remain within the agreed level, • Develop and recommend medium and long range plans for productivity improvement, • Maintain effective communication with trade union officials and preserve good relations with them. • Train and develop staff to meet agreed performance levels. • Direct the preparation and presentation of revenue and cost budgets through liaison with senior managers. • Observe all agreed working procedures and agreements aimed at maintaining effective industrial relations. • Maintain product quality at the level agreed. • Observe the statutory requirements affecting safety and conditions of service. • Ensure that plant and equipment is maintained in a proper state of repair. • Monitor and control sales by units and by revenue. • Analyze costs so that any deviation can be effectively monitored and corrected. • Prepare production schedules on monthly, weekly or daily basis. • Plan, monitor and control work flow


3. Measures of Success	
A measure of success is simply a goal together with a note of what you have to do to achieve it.	
	Your overall goals
	The key results that you have to achieve
	The deadlines you have to meet
	Activities that recur regularly
	Problems you have to overcome frequently
	To decide on the satisfactory level of performance for each of these goals write a list of the outcomes that you would like to see in your job: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in an hour • in a day • in a week and so on.

4. Checking Progress

How do you check how you're getting on? - what information do you produce?

- who else is involved?
- who do you tell, and how (by reports, statistics, returns)? - who else needs to know?
- do you have any regular meetings as part of this checking process?

You may find it helpful to combine key results and progress checks in a table like the one below. (We've filled in a typical entry as an example of what each column should contain).

 Progress Check			
Job title:			
Key result area	Key result	Standard of performance (the conditions that exist if action is well done)	Control (how is level of performance known?)
Communication	Produce house magazine on almost nothing	4 editions / year	time / cost

5. Review Period

Some jobs involve change by their very nature. If this is the case it needs to be acknowledged, and one way of doing this is to agree on a review period. At the end of this period you can discuss your job description to check whether it still adequately describes what you do.

- Does your job change, is it changing?
- Is your organization changing and if so, should your job be changing with it?

You may not know; if you're not sure then it might be a good idea to review your job description once a year just to find out - you may have a surprise! This would form an obvious part of your progress check about which there is more below.

If you know that your job is changing, then:

- what are the key changes?
- over what period are these changes happening?
- how often would it be useful to review your job: if it's too often, you may undermine your own confidence; if it's too infrequent that may allow your job description to become unrelated to the work and that can introduce uncertainty.

👉 What about your job description?
 Now think about your own job description:

- If you already have one, look at it again to see if and how well it covers the points listed above
- If you don't, you'll find it well worthwhile writing one, bearing in mind the hints and examples given earlier.

REVIEWING YOUR PERFORMANCE

We've talked above about checking day-to-day achievement of goals. However, we also need to check how effectively we perform our job overall. Some firms do this through 'Job Reviews' or 'Performance Reviews' which necessarily involve other people. You can go through the basic process by yourself by listing a number of things about your work.

Here's a checklist you can use in a performance review:

- Have you an up-to-date and mutually agreed job description covering your position?
- Which key areas of the job, have needed most of your attention in recent months?
- Thinking of the achievements in which you have played a direct part during the past year, which one or two gave you the most satisfaction?
- Which particular outcomes fell short of your expectation, if any?
- What main obstacles or difficulties have you had to overcome in recent months, if any?
- What problems or frustrations remain to be overcome in the future?
- Specify any areas of your job that you think could be developed.
- Specify any additional training, experience, information or resources that you need to maintain or improve your job performance.
- What are the main priorities in your action plan for the next few months?
- Specify any training or developments that you have undergone during the last year. What were the benefits, if any?
- What other matters do you feel could be usefully raised with your immediate manager during the review?
- When would you like to engage in a similar review of the situation? Who Is Involved in a Review of Performance?

Discussions of your performance must involve you, but they must also involve your boss. Unless your boss, his boss and so on up the line have criteria for performance, it cannot be measured and so can't be really effective.

The discussion must be two-way but either you or your boss can initiate it (Of course, you may feel that you can't easily communicate with your boss. If that's the case we suggest you turn to page 70-73 for hints on how to cope with this problem.)





Others who may be interested in your performance include:

- those who are interested because it affects corporate interests (e.g. other people in the organization, senior management)
- those who are interested because it has a ripple effect on their work (e.g. colleagues, staff)
- those who are interested because they are interested in you (e.g. personnel, family, friends, managers, colleagues)
- you.

© *Have You Met Your Objectives?*

Now you have reached the end of this chapter check back to the list of objectives we gave at the beginning. Have you achieved all that you set out to?

WHAT NEXT?

Your Agenda for Action	
What else do you intend to do now?	
	Can you develop your skills, knowledge or experience further? In what specific areas?
	Do you need a better written job description? If so, how will you go about obtaining one?
	Do you need to review any areas of your work, and in particular, any relating to your key results?
	Are you going to ask anybody to help you review your performance?

Elsewhere in the Book

This chapter has only started the process of looking at how you can work more effectively by providing a framework for looking at yourself and your job. In practice, there will be many other more specific factors or issues that will affect how you work and subsequent chapters are devoted to these. They will of course keep relating back to the issues that we have sketched above: Individual issues are dealt with in the book as follows:

- Chapter 2 looks at time management.
- Chapter 3 is about problem solving.
- Chapter 4 is about your working environment.
- Chapter 5 discusses working with other people.
- Chapter 6 is about organizing systems for storing things, so that you can find them again!
- Chapter 7 is about change and how to handle it.
- Chapter 8 is about coping with stress, switching off.

Help at Work

- Do you have a job review system?
- If so, are there any issues in this chapter, which can be discussed during a job review? If not, can one be set up?
- Who could you ask?