



YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

## Great at Work: How Top Performers Do Less, Work Better, and Achieve More

by Morten Hansen

Free Kindle instant preview: <http://a.co/4NaG6CD>

### 42 Highlights | 2 Notes

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 6

“Follow your passion,” we found, can be dangerous advice. Our top performers took a different approach: they strove to find roles that contributed value to the organization and society, and then matched passion with that sense of purpose. The matching of passion and purpose, and not passion alone, produced the best results.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 6

Whenever they could, top performers carefully selected which priorities, tasks, collaborations, team meetings, committees, analyses, customers, new ideas, steps in a process, and interactions to undertake, and which to neglect or reject. Yet this more nuanced way of working smart wasn't just about being selective. The very best redesigned their work so that they would create the most value (a term we will define in chapter three) and then they applied intense, targeted efforts in their selected work activities.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 7

To work smart means to maximize the value of your work by selecting a few activities and applying intense targeted effort.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 19

The term “focus” consists of two activities: choosing a few priorities, and then dedicating your efforts toward excelling at them. Many people prioritize a few items at work, but they don't obsess—they simply do less. That's a mistake.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 24

We often disparage obsessions in our daily lives, viewing them as dangerous or debilitating. But obsession can be a productive force.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 37

The conventional wisdom states that people who work harder and take on more responsibilities accomplish more and perform better. Countering this view, management experts recommend that people focus by choosing just a few areas of work.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 38

Say “no” to your boss: Explain to your boss that adding more to your to-do list will hurt your performance. The path to greatness isn’t pleasing your boss all the time. It’s saying “no” so that you can apply intense effort to excel in a few chosen areas.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 48

As our study suggested, we should evaluate the value of our work by measuring how much others benefit from it. That’s an outside-in view, because it directs attention to the benefits our work brings to others. The typical inside-out view, by contrast, measures work according to whether we have completed our tasks and goals, regardless of whether they produce any benefits.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 48

The advice “start with goals” when planning an effort, is wrong. We need to start with value, then proceed to goals. Ask yourself: what benefits do your various work activities produce, really?

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 55

Five Ways to Create Value Main Question Way to Improve Value Example Are You Working on the Right Things? 1. Less Fluff: Eliminate or reduce existing activities of little value. HP Manager’s report that no one read; APM Terminals’ “stripping” and weighing trucks. 2. More Right Stuff: Spend more time on existing activities of high value. Hartmut Goeritz focusing on container throughput. 3. More “Gee, Whiz”: Create new activities of high value. Goeritz’s “routing service” for shipping companies and freight operators. Are You Doing the Things Right? 4. Five Star Rating: Find new ways to improve the quality of your chosen activities. Greg Green changing the quality of teaching and learning by flipping the classroom; Goeritz’s routing service. 5. Faster, Cheaper: Find new ways to do your chosen activities more efficiently. Goeritz’s “Never drive empty” solution.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 56

When people redesign, the key is not the degree of change they’re undertaking. Instead, it’s the magnitude of the value they can create.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 60

Hunting for pain points is counterintuitive. When we hear people complain, we tend to dismiss them as whiners. Carmen might have grown to resent all those angry insurance agents. Instead, she went beyond her job specification and worked with software coders to create a better setup. As annoying as complainers might sometimes seem, they do us all a service: they identify the pain, for free!

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 61

Effective redesign requires that we loosen the shackles of the familiar and ask why things are the way they are, and whether there's a better way. To make these discoveries, I recommend that you start asking some "stupid" why questions: Why do hotels have a reception desk for check-in? Why do we make presentations filled with slides? Why do we call Monday morning staff meetings? Why do kids have two months of summer vacation from school? Why do we have to submit expense reports? Why do patients have to spend two days in a hospital bed after surgery? Why do we conduct annual performance reviews?

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 62

The "Work Harder" Convention The more hours people work, the better they perform. Great performance is about delivering on existing goals, tasks, and metrics as defined in one's job description.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 64

The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow. —William Pollard

---

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 65

As our parents and teachers have drilled into us, mastering a skill means repeating it endlessly. Practice makes perfect, right? Wrong. The secret isn't repetition. The idea that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to master a skill is misleading. One year of practice repeated in the same way for ten years doesn't make perfect. Rather, a certain kind of practice makes perfect. Professor K. Anders Ericsson of Florida State University and his colleagues have studied how people achieve mastery in music, science, and sports. As Ericsson and Robert Pool discuss in their book *Peak*, two factors contribute to mastery: hours of repetition, yes, but more important, what Ericsson coined deliberate practice. Individuals who progress the most meticulously assess outcomes, solicit feedback based on known standards of excellence, and strive to correct tiny flaws that the feedback has uncovered.<sup>6</sup> This purposeful and informed way of practicing explains why some learn at a much faster rate than others.

**Yep -- and lines right up w/ @dalecarnegie teachings too**

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 68

People in our 5,000-person study who adopted the learning loop performed much better than those who didn't.<sup>9</sup> We created a learning loop scorecard consisting of six items that included phrases such as: "makes changes in an effort to improve"; "tries out new approaches"; "learns from failures"; "is curious;" "doesn't believe he/she knows best"; and "experiments a lot" (see the research appendix for the complete wording of each item). We found a clear result: effective learners were likely to place 15 points higher in our performance ranking than the less effective ones.<sup>10</sup> Say a salesperson is currently performing in the top 20 percent among all the salespeople in her company. By mastering the learning loop, she would climb to the top 5 percent, emerging as an outstanding sales rep.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 71

Basic Steps in a Learning Loop

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 72

Learning on the job is not about practicing for 10,000 hours; it's about making sure you perform each loop with high quality.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 81

The people in our study who dared to risk a short-term performance dip reaped performance benefits. Statistically, we found a strong positive association between experimentation and excellent performance.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 83

As people develop expertise and skill in an activity, they can become very good, even excellent. But then something happens. They plateau. A large-scale study in North Carolina, for example, showed that teachers improved from zero to two years of teaching experience, but then stalled.<sup>18</sup> Teachers with twenty-seven years of experience (that's more than 40,000 hours of practice<sup>19</sup>) were not much more effective than those with two years in improving students' achievement, as measured by their proficiency in English and Math. So much for the 10,000-hour rule! People seek out new improvements, but only until they reach a certain level of satisfaction. Then they stop, judging themselves "good enough." The Nobel laureate in economics Herbert Simon termed this "satisficing" (a play on words that combined "satisfying" and "sufficing"<sup>20</sup>). Push Beyond the Stall Point The Learning Loop Leads to Better Outcomes Than Mindless Repetition, but You Must Push Through the Stall Point

---

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 84

Top performers don't rest. They keep learning. Remember Jiro, the sushi chef from chapter two? At age eighty-five, he was still pushing himself. "All I want to do is make better sushi," he said in the film. "I do the same things over and over again, improving bit by bit. Even at my age, after decades of work, I don't think I have achieved perfection."

**Key point from @mortenthanzen**

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 86

The New "Work Smarter" Perspective It isn't how many hours you practice. It's how you learn. And that "how" differs in the workplace from the deliberate practice pursued by athletes and musicians. The best performers at work implement the learning loop, in which the quality—and not the quantity—of each iteration matters most.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 87

You can deploy six tactics to implement the learning loop in your job: 1. Carve out just 15 2. Chunk it 3. Measure the "soft" 4. Get nimble feedback, fast 5. Dig the dip 6. Confront the stall point.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 87

Effective learners break an overarching skill into micro-behaviors: they are small, concrete actions you take on a daily basis to improve a skill. The action shouldn't take more than fifteen minutes to perform and review, and it should have a clear impact on skill development.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 89

As the well-known venture capitalist Marc Andreessen tweeted: "The problem is that we do NOT hear from people who have failed to become successful by doing what they love."<sup>6</sup> It's possible that passion played a role in making Oprah successful. But it also may have played a role in preventing countless others from reaching their full potential.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 91

Purpose and passion are not the same. Passion is "do what you love," while purpose is "do what contributes." Purpose asks, "What can I give the world?" Passion asks, "What can the world give me?"

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 91

Of the seven factors in this book that predict performance, high levels of both passion and purpose—"P-squared," as I call it—was the second most important one, predicting a boost in a person's percentile rank of 18 points compared with a similar person who had neither passion nor purpose.<sup>12</sup> People who had just one of the two—passion but no purpose, or purpose but no passion—scored lower on performance. The key therefore is to infuse your work with both passion and purpose, to aim for P-squared.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 95

Matching Passion and Purpose When People Achieve P-Squared, They Bring More Focused Energy to Their Job and Perform Better

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 96

Neither company size nor the number of years on the job had much bearing on how much people loved their work. Our preconceptions about purposeful jobs are inaccurate, too. We think that more mundane or menial jobs can't contain purpose, and indeed some research has shown that many people don't find low-paying service jobs meaningful.<sup>18</sup> But other research has revealed the opposite—that some people can and do derive a sense of purpose from even the most menial, low-status tasks. As Yale School of Management professor Amy Wrzesniewski discovered in her study of hospital janitors, some found their jobs highly meaningful. In their eyes, they weren't simply cleaning floors. They were caring for patients and helping their families during their times of need.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 111

Many people either follow their passion, or they ignore their passion. But as our research shows, the issue of achieving passion at work is not a matter of “following” or “ignoring,” but rather of “matching.” • In our study, managers and employees who matched passion and purpose performed far better than those who didn’t. They were likely to place 18 percentile points higher than those who didn’t in our 5,000-person dataset. • People with a strong sense of both passion and purpose are more energized, getting more done in each hour of work (and they don’t work many extra hours).

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 115

I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. —Maya Angelou

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 120

When we analyzed our case studies, I was struck by how the best performers went beyond rational arguments and adopted various tactics to advocate for their projects. I discovered that the best advocates—what I call forceful champions—effectively pursued their goals at work by mastering two skills to gain the support of other people. They inspired others by evoking emotions, and they circumvented resistance by deploying “smart grit.”

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 123

To inspire people and gain their support, line up high-arousal emotions on your side—make them mad and fearful about the present, and joyful and excited about your proposed future goal. The chart “Lining Up Emotions in the Right Ways” lists high-arousal emotions that you will want to provoke when persuading others to follow your lead.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 129

The tactics of lining up emotions properly, showing (and not just telling), and making people feel purpose enable you to inspire people so that they will support your efforts. Everyone can use these tactics; you don’t have to have a charismatic personality to inspire colleagues at work.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 131

Grit at work is not about putting your head down and bulldozing through successive walls of resistance. Smart grit involves not only persevering but also taking into account the perspective of people you’re trying to influence and devising tactics that will win them over.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 138

Forceful champions use a variety of behaviors to arouse emotions and inspire coworkers to support their efforts:

- They make people angry about today and excited for tomorrow.
- They show and don’t just tell, using striking

photos and demos to evoke intense emotions. • They make people feel purpose, connecting daily tedious work to a grander purpose.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 146

Based on our interviews, I tried to discern the unspoken rules—social scientists call them “implicit norms”—for having a good fight at Reckitt Benckiser. I came up with the following list: • Show up to every meeting 100 percent prepared. • Craft an opinion and deliver it with conviction (and data). • Stay open to others’ ideas, not just your own. • Let the best argument win, even if it isn’t yours (and often it isn’t). • Feel free to stand up and shout, but never make the argument personal. • Always listen—really listen—to minority views. • Never pursue consensus for its own sake.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 154

The best performers advocate properly: They craft an opinion, argue their case with vigor, outline its weaknesses and assumptions, listen to other points of view, debate the issues, and change their mind if warranted. (See the sidebar for tips for debating and listening drawn from my conversations with hundreds of managers and employees.)

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 165

To have a productive fight in meetings, pursue the following strategies, either as leader or participant: • Maximize diversity, not talent • Make it safe to speak up • Prod the quiet to speak • Show up as an advocate, not a salesperson • Ask nonleading questions.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 190

Disciplined collaboration consists of the following five rules: 1. Establish the business case—a compelling reason—for any proposed collaboration initiative, small or large. If it’s questionable, say no. 2. Craft a unifying goal that excites people, so that they prioritize this project. 3. Reward people for collaboration results, not activities. 4. Commit full resources—time, skills, and money—to the collaboration. If you can’t obtain those resources, narrow its scope or kill it. 5. Tailor trust boosters—quickly—to specific trust problems in the partnership.

---

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 199

The Mayo Clinic defines job burnout as a “special type of job stress—a state of physical, emotional or mental exhaustion combined with doubts about your competence and the value of your work.”

---