

Excellence

133 – 168

Plato \

Excellence is not a gift, but a skill that takes practice.

We do not act rightly because we are excellent, in fact we achieve excellence by acting rightly.

\ Athenian Philosopher

Aristotle \

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.

\ Greek Philosopher

Continuous Improvement Along the Journey



Excellence

There are many definitions of excellence, but fundamentally for us it's all about always looking for better ways to do things. Whether that's looking at 'marginal gains', '1% improvements' or 'incremental innovation', or using techniques such as why / why analysis, process mapping or root cause analysis, etc. – they all lead to continually questioning everything we do and making, often small, gradual improvements across all that we do.

I've mentioned previously that we embrace the Excellence Model as our key framework for pursuing excellence across the business and also in the short, medium and long term, the section below will cover our approach in more detail and also why we started using it in the first place.

We also talk about our '**Journey to Excellence**' as in reality we will always be on this journey, striving to improve and basically makes things easier and better for all concerned. We will never reach the destination of 'excellence' as those goal posts will always, quite rightly, keep moving, stretching us further, but providing priorities and focus along the way.

Pursuing excellence (or continuous improvement) is part of a company's culture, something that becomes an element of

your DNA and therefore part of everyone's habits and routines on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

Excellence is also about 'doing' things, looking for and making those changes and useful improvements, hence why I've included a section below on 'Making the most of our time – getting things done'.

When we're considering 'excellence' it is also crucial that we remember our '**Balance in Life**' – the imperative importance of work / life balance, family, friends, personal development, health, diet, exercise, and so on, and therefore excellence must take into account all the key parts of that equation, also measuring and monitoring that balance is being achieved (a key part of our focus on 'Legacy').

Excellence is also covered in many other areas of this book, particularly at the start. For excellence to be just 'what we do' (or aspire to), it must form part of our fundamental values (personally and as a business), and therefore also part of all of our approaches. Take recruitment for instance, we always aim to recruit on **attitude, aptitude and personal values**, and then train for skills, as it's the foundation of personal excellence that will drive the continuous improvement culture of the company.

Excellence therefore starts with purpose and why and ends with our legacy (or at least the ongoing journey to leave the world in a better place).

The Excellence Model & Us

I think it may be useful at a high level to understand why we chose the Excellence Model, how we broadly use it and what we've learned so far, so that we have some perspective of how it all fits together and how it fundamentally helps us.

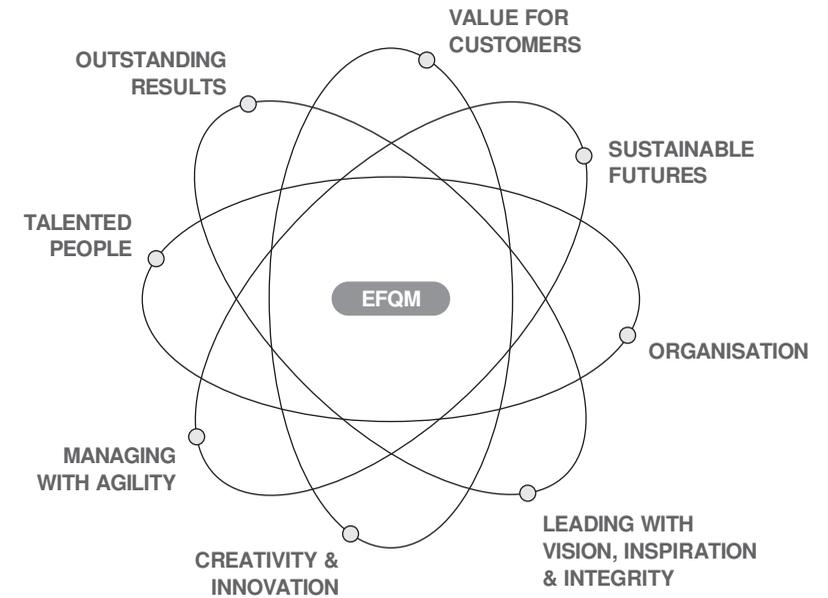
But before we get to that... what is the Excellence Model?

There is a significant amount of information available regarding the history of the model and its extensive use across a wide variety of businesses, charities and academic institutions, etc. and so I won't go into that detail here, but I think it's worth highlighting that the model / framework on page 141 is based upon the 'Fundamental Principles' (on the right), all of which link into our values and vision. →

Excellence Definition from EQFM 2013:

Excellent organisations achieve and sustain outstanding levels of performance that meet or exceed the expectations of all their stakeholders.

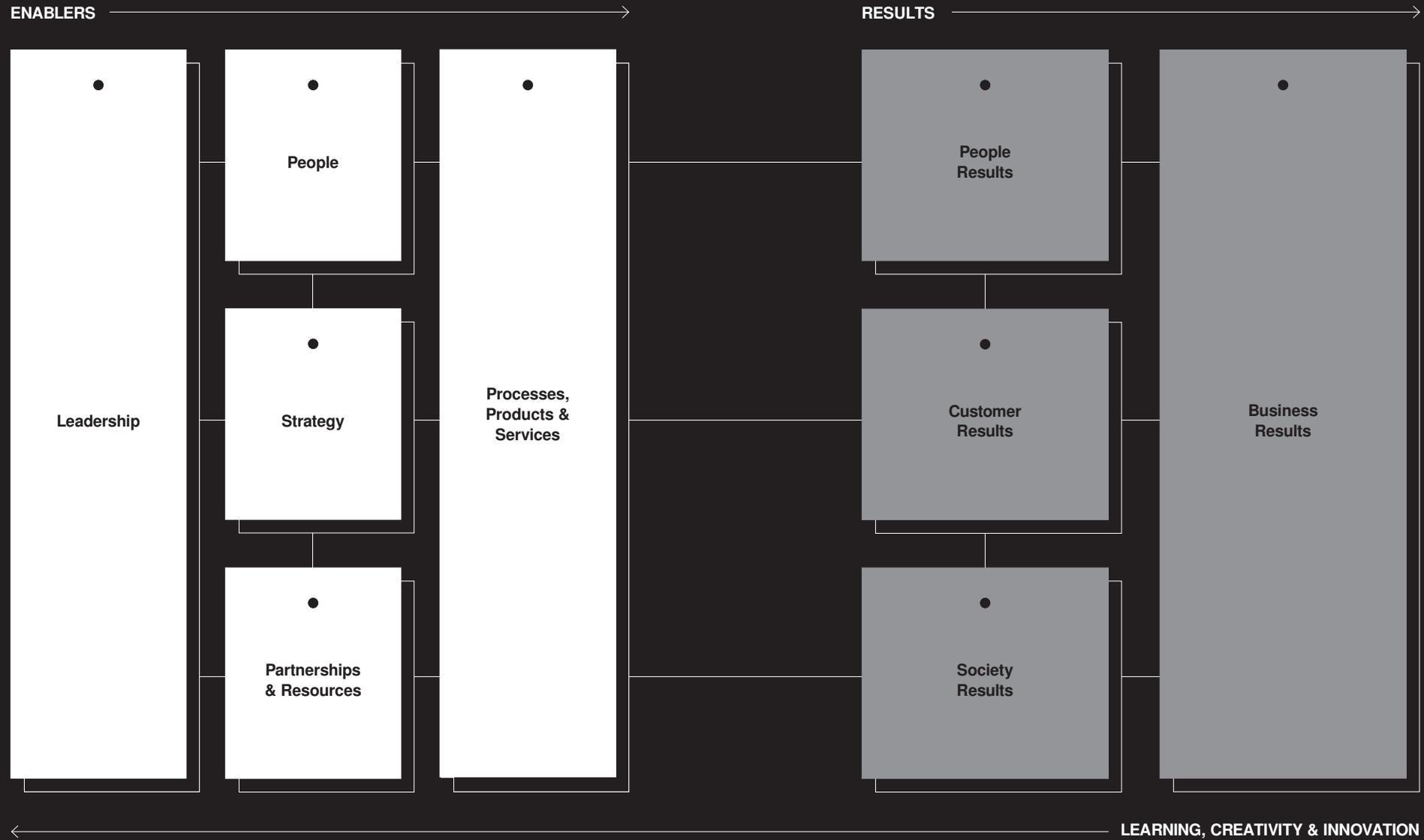
Fundamental Concepts of Excellence
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The definition rightly focusses on sustainable levels of outstanding performance, thus you must be able to prove **long term confidence** (cause and effect), and improvements across all areas of the model and therefore your business, and that you are fundamentally delivering your strategy and that meets or exceeds what all of your key stakeholders need (stakeholders are basically all the key people and parties connected to the business – employees, suppliers, shareholders, banks, society etc.). →

The Excellence Model

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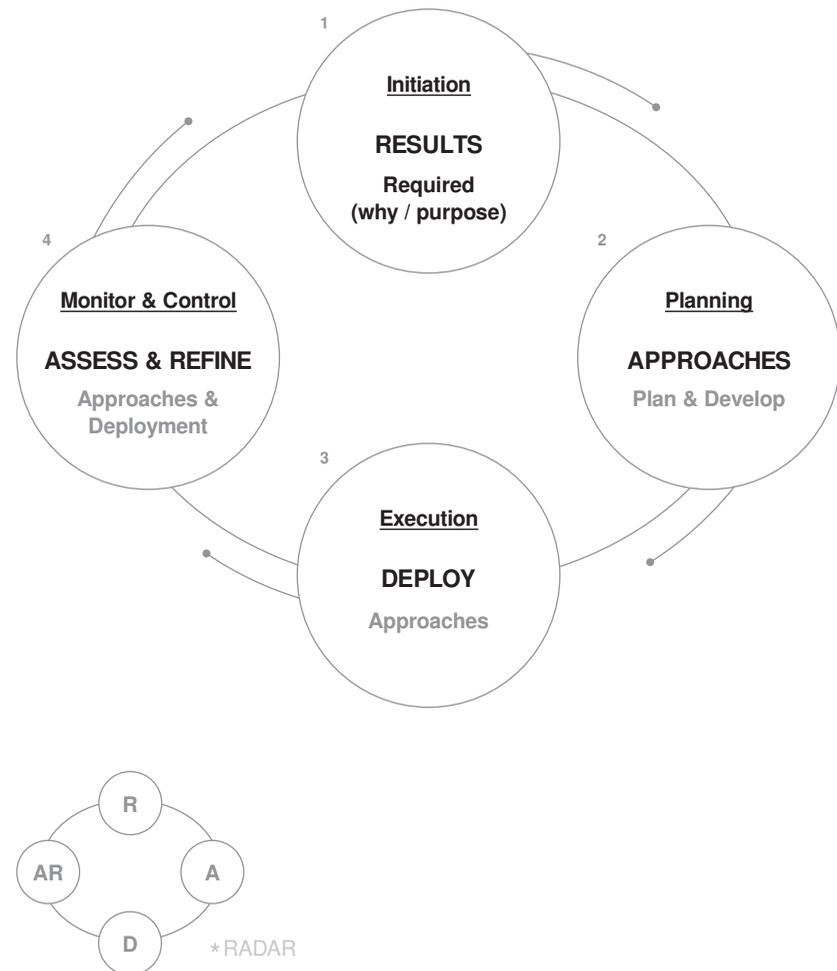
The model itself sets out the framework of what excellence looks like in each of the nine key areas – five '**Enablers**', effectively what makes everything happen; and four '**Results**', all the things we should measure to ensure we're delivering our strategy in a balanced and sustainable way.

Each of the areas above then have much more detail behind them, typically four or five other key focus areas with many examples of what excellence can be, whilst still being flexible to suit the needs of **any** organisation.

I've mentioned the RADAR process (from EFQM) in Chap – 2. RADAR is actually used as the key measurement tool when conducting an excellence assessment (across each of the nine areas of the model), but we've embraced it more widely as a great approach to take that reminds us that we should always start with the end in mind and understand the fundamental why and purpose for all that we do.

Using the process (to the right) we start with step 1 before any other action is taken to ensure the purpose and desired result is actually worth doing and meets the overall plan (or strategy). Only then do we move to planning and developing the approach that will be taken to achieve the desired results, before moving to actually deploying that approach, and then finally, and very importantly, assessing and refining the approach and deployment to see how we can improve in the future (for this we also use a Project Debrief process when appropriate) – all part of the journey to excellence.

Projects \ Actions
 RADAR Always start with the end in mind



Anglepoise Excellence Journey so far

Some years ago, I was looking for a companywide strategic planning and measurement structure that would pull together many of the other things that we were doing into a cohesive whole, so that we had a long-term framework to help drive our strategy, prioritisation, focus and excellence.

Here's a brief summary of the key activities and processes we had in place prior to using the Excellence Model, all of which we continue to use but now within its overarching framework:

- \ Created our **Vision, Purpose, Values, Mission**, etc.
- \ Annual **strategic process** (where appropriate using PESTLE, SWOT, Porters)
- \ '**Great Place to Work**' framework and action plan – based on 'Best Companies', Gallup and 'Investors in People' approaches
- \ **ISO approaches** to quality and other internal processes
- \ Annual **People Engagement** surveys and actions based on Gallup Q12

Once we had decided to embrace the Excellence Model and use it across the business these are some of the key steps, we took to successfully embed it:

- \ Getting started and obtaining 'buy in' – sold the **Excellence strategy and action plan** to the Board / SLT
- \ Joined the BQF (EFQM representatives in the UK)
- \ Attended excellence model assessor **training**, became **qualified**, and joined their model user group

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- \ Visited other **model users** and **winners** – Ricoh; St Monica Trust; Winchester University – many, if not all model users I've met are very happy to share learnings and best practice
- \ Shared our **Excellence plan** company wide
- \ Used **appropriate language** (cut the jargon), and repetition!
- \ Completed our first **internal excellence assessment** (after training and qualification)
- \ Set up '**Excellence Teams**' – leader and 'volunteers' to action assessment outcomes via **excellence projects**

One of the great benefits of using the model and annual assessment is how it helps to prioritise and focus excellence activities to suit your business and strategy. At Anglepoise here are some examples of our initial and ongoing activities on the journey to excellence:

- \ Established our '**Balanced Scorecard**' and departmental key metrics (see Chap – 2) – used for assessing monthly / quarterly / annual targets against our Mission and providing everyone with clarity
- \ Ongoing '**Excellence Projects**' – initially 50+ including some of the following:
 - \ Develop / expand '**Delight the Customer**' strategy, including **Net Promoter surveys**, etc.
 - \ Develop / implement **long term IT plan** (infrastructure; ERP; Sharepoint; Intra / Extranet; CRM; etc.)
 - \ Define and broaden our **Charity** and **Community Support** activities (Society) and determine plan for **Society perception measures** / performance indicators, then deploy
 - \ Create process for identifying **Partnerships** and **Collaborations**
 - \ Develop companywide **Process ownership**, and continuous improvement of all processes

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- \ Continue annual **People Engagement** survey (based on Gallup Q12)
- \ Conduct annual internal **excellence assessments** to measure progress, determine key action priorities and set new targets

We're now well into our excellence journey but what are our key learnings so far?

- \ It **takes longer** than you think, generally we were too optimistic on delivery of excellence projects
- \ Always use **appropriate language** – consider what words / phrases people will really understand, and how that will 'stick' to become part of just what we do and say, a new part to our culture
- \ Always be conscious of the **SAY / DO gap** – mentioned a few times in this book and critical to the success of companywide change – if you say you're going to do something – do it
- \ Repetition, repetition, repetition – it takes time for things to sink in and become part of our culture
- \ Make everything **habit** and **routine** – it just becomes what we do
- \ Plagiarise with pride – make the best use of the excellence community, all of the other model users are very open to sharing best practice – learn, adapt, make it work and improve
- \ Always '**Ask Why?**'

That wraps up our focus on the Excellence model and our journey so far, the following section is about understanding how we make the most of our time to actually get things done along with focussing on continuous improvement.

Making the Most of Time \ Getting Things Done

This section is mostly around 'Time Management' which can sound pretty boring as a topic, but you need to remember that the more that we get out of our time the more content we will be in our lives.

Time in a day or week is finite, we cannot create more time, just make better use of what we have. If you choose to do something you may be sacrificing the time for something else, so **choose wisely**, and make the most of it.

It may seem a little selfish but when considering your time it's worth thinking about 'What's in it for me?', 'How can I make my life easier or more enjoyable?', 'How can I do more of what I want to do?' – making the most of our time will help achieve that.

Before we get into the recommendations around time management, we should always remind ourselves to start with the end in mind, ask yourself – 'Does this even need doing?' – I like to think that this is the first rule of **time management** – if something doesn't need doing then time management is irrelevant, just don't do it and choose to do something else that's actually needed and useful – again, as always, **ask why**.

It's also worth looking out for overlaps, or touch points between activities and people, i.e. if two people are duplicating certain parts of their work. Consider a 'Sales Manager' and 'Customer Support' team, ideally they should have clear boundaries so that there's only a very small amount of overlap and hopefully no duplication or wasted effort, even down to too many people reading the same email when in reality only person needed to.

Imagine the hands below are individual people or roles, ideally we want the lightest overlap, or touch point possible:

Ideally Minimal Overlap Between Roles:



Heavy Overlap = Avoid



Light Overlap = Ideal

Time Management Best Practice

To improve your time management, it is important to remember that you need to find what will actually work for you. It's unlikely that you will just be able to copy exactly what someone else does who is very efficient with their time and so over the following pages think about what is most likely to work for you – adapt it, try it out and then adapt again to get the most out of your time.

The following section covers best practice tools & techniques that can assist and improve your time management, but it will only work if you choose to embrace it and actively make it happen.

Do You Think You Need Time Management?

Consider the following statements – what category do you fall into at the moment, and where do you ideally want to be?

1

I choose what I do and when I do it.

2

Much of my time is used reacting to the demands of others and the system, but I still have some free time that I can use in the way I wish.

Of course, ideally, we probably all want to be statement 1, but in practical terms it's more realistic to aim for between 1 and 2.

3

All of my time is taken up reacting to the demands of others and the system. I hardly ever have any free time that is truly under my control.

4

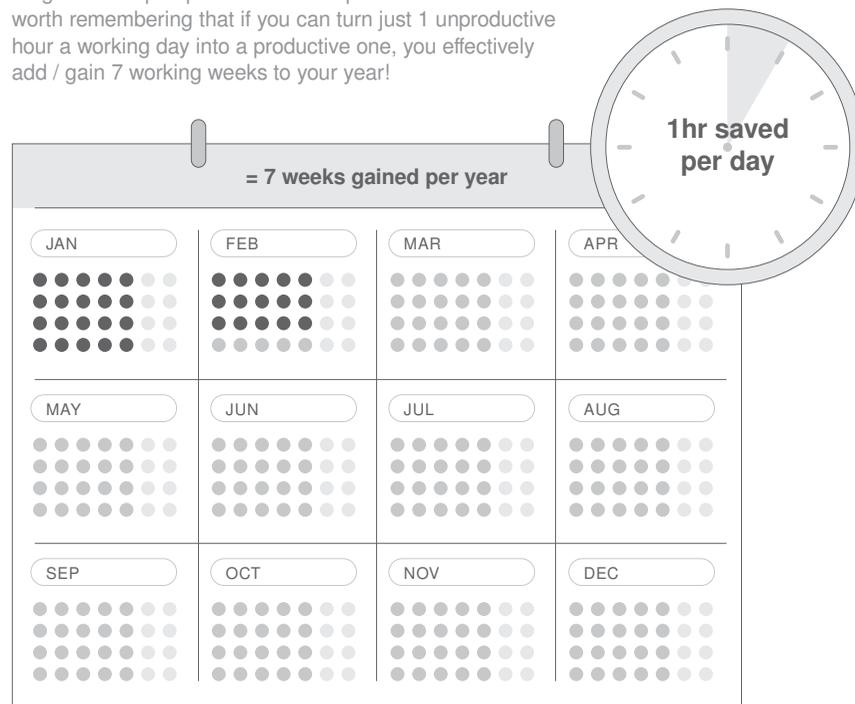
There is never enough time to even satisfy the demands of others and the system. I always feel like I'm behind and struggling to catch up.

It's also interesting to consider the same statements for your work and personal lives – if there is a difference, ask yourself why, and also keep in mind your personal life 'time management' over the following sections.

How Important is Time, and Why?

Do you feel that you have less time now than five or ten years ago? – for your family, friends, hobbies, work, etc. – if so why? In the modern world we all seem to have more options, more information, more choice – but it is your choice – should we prioritise – be more selective in what we choose to do?

To gain some perspective on the importance of time it's worth remembering that if you can turn just 1 unproductive hour a working day into a productive one, you effectively add / gain 7 working weeks to your year!



(1 x 5 x 52 = 260 hours; 260 / 37.5 = 7 weeks)
Imagine what else you could be doing with that time.

What is the 'Value' of Your Time?

What value are you adding to yourself and the business? Clearly there is a cost for anyone in a business and they need to contribute at least that value otherwise there would be no benefit. Consider also the 'cost' of meetings where many people attend – is it necessary, who really needs to be there, is it unnecessarily long?

Does Anyone 'Value' Their Time Outside of Work?

What jobs do you pay others to do for you (that you could do yourself, like washing your car)? If you're choosing to pay others to do jobs for you then you probably feel your 'value' is worth more than that cost (although this is probably a subconscious decision, not maths based).

Improving time management generally in your life can allow more time for family, hobbies, etc.

What is Time Management?

It's more about management, than time. Writing everything down in a diary or task list can provide clarity of what you think you need to do but is it actually **worth** doing.

Another thought to consider – remember the last time you went on holiday – did you achieve a lot more than normal in the few days before going? Tying up loose ends, tidying things up, making sure things were taken care of before you left. What techniques did you employ? Could you repeat them? If you were going away tomorrow, how differently would you work through today, would you be a better time manager?

Multi-tasking \ To be Avoided?

There was a period of time where multi-tasking was seen as an ideal way of productively working, but research has shown that it should be avoided where possible.

This research shows that the brain needs a 'warm-up' period of time when preparing for a new activity. Once this is done your mind is 'primed' to work productively. But even a 30 second distraction can be enough to 'derail' this, and the whole process then needs to be repeated. This can lead to as much as **20% to 40%** of your time being **wasted** (equal to 1.5 to 3 hours per day).

So, it's best to allocate time to **specific tasks** and then **focus on completing them**. Tell people what you are doing to minimise interruption, perhaps consider working from home, or in a quieter space in the office for those particular tasks.

Another benefit of not multi-tasking is that it reduces the likelihood of over-runs. For instance, if there are 3 tasks to be completed, and they are effectively done in parallel, then there is a 100% chance one of them will not be completed by the deadline. Whereas if each task is completed in one go then there is only a 33% chance that one task will be late.

Consider the diagrams below:
The Over-run Risk of Multi-tasking

 Not multi-tasking reduces the likelihood of over-runs

 Multi-tasking is highly likely to lead to missed deadlines

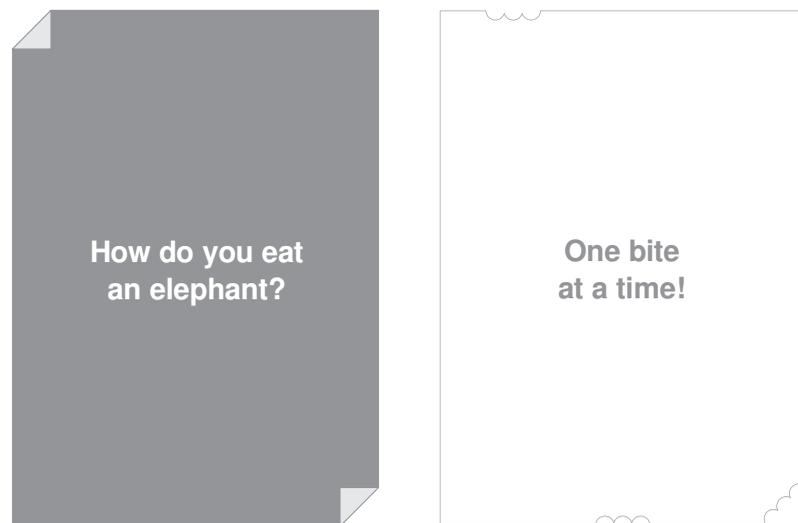
	M	T	W	T	F
WK1	A	A	A	A	A
WK2	B	B	B	B	B
WK3	C	C	C	C	C
DUE					

	M	T	W	T	F
WK1	ABC	ABC	ABC	ABC	ABC
WK2	ABC	ABC	ABC	ABC	ABC
WK3	ABC	ABC	ABC	ABC	ABC
DUE	 BC	C	C	C	C

Avoiding multi-tasking shouldn't be confused with not having lots of different things to do. It means you should prioritise and focus on getting each one done in one go, rather than doing bits of each activity and not actually finishing them off.

Also, there are some instances where multi-tasking may be beneficial, e.g. when answering the phone, you might be printing out some documents, etc.

Remember:
Break all Large Tasks into Bite-sized Chunks



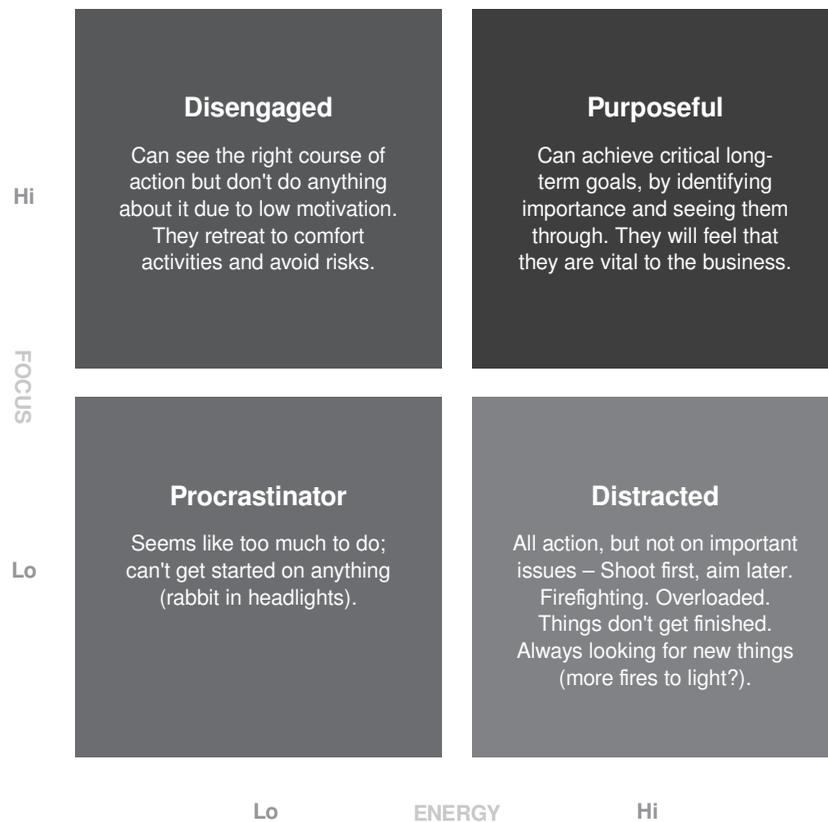
Focus & Energy

Before we look at time management best practice specifically we should also consider where we need to be as individuals to actually make a difference in the jobs that we do, and how personal change in our behaviours can be achieved (again the following model is based on significant research).

What is Personal Focus & Energy?

Focus	Concentrated attention (set clear goals and see them through to completion)
Energy	Passion, enthusiasm, motivation, and personal commitment

What happens as the level of focus and energy changes with us as individuals? Consider the diagram (on the following page) which also shows the typical % of people in an average business: ↪



Key:
 Typical % of people in an average business



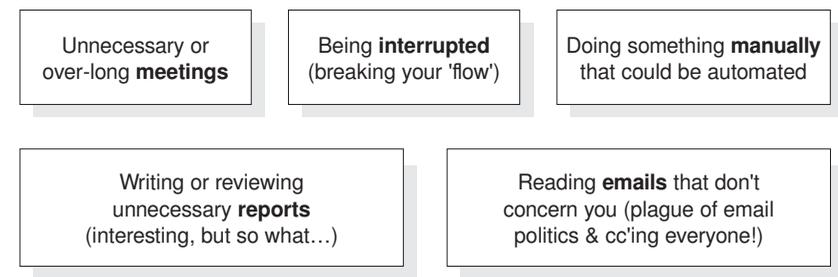
The **purposeful** decide what must be achieved and then **manage** the **environment** around them. The others look to **outside forces** (bosses, peers, salaries, job description, etc.) to decide what is feasible (or not), and then let those factors **control** and **constrain** them.

The purposeful realise that they are **masters of their own destiny** and use their focus and energy to determine and achieve their goals.

Using the suggestions in this book consider how you can become 'purposeful', plan how you will get there, and then develop habits and routines to stay there.

What 'Wastes' Most of Your Time?

Taking into account some of the approaches mentioned so far, it's worth making a list of all the things (work and home) that you consider a 'waste' or unproductive use of your time, e.g:



So, being completely honest with yourself, take a few moments to draw up this list and if appropriate assign the amount of time 'wasted' per week, either by hour or % of your time (and bear in mind that 1 hour saved a day = 7 weeks gained in a year).

Then assess what you can stop doing, prioritise the rest, and use some of the following suggested techniques to be more effective and make best use of your time.

The Balance Important Vs Urgent

All of life's tasks fall into the grid below, consider what key tasks you do and where they currently fall:

	URGENT!	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT!	1	2
NOT IMPORTANT	3	4

1	Crises management (this should be avoided through good time management)
2	Effective and in control
3	Wasting time with urgent trivia
4	Time wasting / comfort work (don't do it)

Clearly, we all ideally want to be in zone 2 – **effective** and in **control**, completing **important** tasks but not when they're **urgent** (and then likely to be rushed and mistakes are made).

Therefore, with all of the tasks that you do at work or in your life, consider their **importance** and **urgency**, and then take appropriate action.

Time Management Tools & Techniques

Remember time management is more about management, than time.

Common tools that are used for making the most of your time – Outlook (by far the most effective), To Do lists, Task lists, MS Project, Excel (as a planner), etc. – consider each of these tools and how well they work for you. Task or to do lists for instance – do you always consistently complete all the tasks and on time? If not, why not? Is it visual enough for you, and flexible to meet the daily demands or your role?

The most important thing is that you find what **works for you** personally and consistently delivers on time results, and then live by it (daily habits and routines) to make the tool most effective.

It's also worth understanding if you generally think in terms of hours, days or weeks – if you generally look at an overall week only, but then often you're late on a short daily task, then break the tasks into smaller chunks (say down to the hour), focus on that task and get it done.

Efficiency Suggestions

\ Plan Weekly

Plan on a **weekly** basis (then review daily), it provides better balance, context and flexibility. Perhaps every Friday afternoon so that you know what you're doing the following week and can relax over the weekend.

(tip: set a 30-minute recurring event in Outlook every Friday pm to plan in this weekly activity)

Then for each of your typical weekly activities you should consider if they are **Important** and / or **Urgent** (i.e. which area do they fall into in the table in the above section), and then take appropriate action.

Consider how long you think you should be spending on them and assign a time (or percentage).

\ Review

Review this regularly, ideally **daily**, and be **flexible**. Don't let the plan become a millstone. Update your plans and times and learn from your experience.

\ Discuss

Discuss these activities with your line manager, task manager, or colleagues. Sharing this information acts as a good **benchmark** and helps to educate others how long certain tasks can take and why.

\ Do It

Do it – be **ruthless** with the implementation of your plans, be **competitive**.

You may want to also consider measuring fairly accurately what you actually do every day, over a few weeks. You will probably be surprised by how many hours are spent dealing with unnecessary email, or administration tasks.

Question everything that you do and ask, 'Is this necessary?'

Tips to Manage Your Email

How many unread emails are in your inbox? – imagine that was paperwork on your desk, would you still behave the same way?

\ Checking Emails

Only check your email 4 or 5 times a day (say every 2 hours), it will radically **reduce** the amount of **distractions** and keep you focussed on completing the task in hand. Remember, truly urgent messages are more likely to be delivered in person or over the phone.

\ Email Control

Never handle mail or email more than **once**, either **deal with it, file it, delegate it, or delete it**. Where possible ensure that 'spurious' or 'irrelevant' documents don't reach you at all.

\ Communication Method

For **teams, agree a communication method** that allows a simpler identification of messages and required action. (e.g. start your email topic with the customer name)

\ Notifications

Only check emails when you want to – so **turn off notifications and pop ups** – they are just a distraction and time waster.

\ Screen Messages

If you don't recognise the sender or topic – then **mark it as junk** (block sender), or just delete it.

\ Unsubscribe

Unsubscribe from annoying or unnecessary newsgroups. Even if they are occasionally interesting (but not **essential**). The distraction and additional time wasted is unlikely to outweigh any benefit.

\ Normal Post

If you are regularly receiving brochures or newsletters that aren't particularly useful then get removed from the mailing list.

Where Can You Start?

Pick a cut-off date (say 6 or 12 months) and archive all messages prior to that. If they are not required after for instance, 6 months, then delete it.

Set up your new regime and stick to it. Put reminders in the calendar, diary, task list, etc. (whatever **works for you**).

Remember, if you don't do anything, then nothing will change or improve.

Other Useful Efficiency Tips

\ Peak Performance

Know your 'peak' performance – work out what times of the day you work at your best and set aside activities for then that require the greatest concentration.

\ Delegate

Where you can, and where appropriate (pick tasks for people's **strengths**).

\ Trust Instincts

Keep asking yourself the following question – "What is the highest and **best use of my time right now?**" and **trust your instincts**.

\ Organise

Organise your desk – whatever works for you – prioritise – trays, folders, maintain an 'essential' workspace. With **paperwork** – either **deal with it, file it, delegate it, or bin it**.

Remember – as with all **continuous improvement** and **personal development** it cannot be effective unless you **choose** to do **something positive** about it – set yourself some actions and do them **today**.

Other Useful Efficiency Tips

\ Minimise Interruptions

Work from home (where practical and always considering your customers and colleagues).

Inform people what you are doing, and that you are working to a deadline.

Say to people 'Can I **get back to you** by....', rather than interrupting what you are doing.

Use the right **body language** – don't give time away.

Follow email tips – **turn off notifications and pop ups!**

\ Interesting & Non-essential

When you receive emails or documents that are **Interesting but not Essential** – put these to one side, collect them to read once a week. If you then find you didn't have time, delete them.

\ Extra Work

If you think that taking on **extra work** could jeopardise the customer relationship / project etc. then once you've thought it through, justified it and discussed with your line manager – say no.

\ Disciplined & Flexible

Be **disciplined** and yet **flexible**. Reflect on what you have learned and make changes.