

CHAPTER 2

Mindset for Work

What does it take to be a performer that is fulfilled and happy? We will explore the two main areas that fuel this mindset which are:



No. 1 : “Work is Good”



No. 2 : “ I will use my inner motivation to move forward and be independent”

Work is Good

Embodying the “Work is Good” mindset is the first step towards being fulfilled at work. Look at it as a strong foundation. Without the fundamentals of being in the right frame of mind, it is hard to approach work with the right attitude to ensure success. Unfortunately, a majority of people in the workforce approach their jobs with a negative mindset.

1. I just work so that I can pay the bills and feed my family;
2. I am here because I have nothing else to do;
3. My pay is pretty decent so I just do what’s necessary;
4. I go to work and wait for the clock to strike 5pm;
5. I am here because this is the only job I could get.

This negative attitude towards work is actually more common than you think. In fact, it would be safe to say that a majority of the people in the workforce feel this way. The negativity creates a stumbling block towards success and prohibits it because the person is unmotivated and unchallenged. By adjusting your mindset into thinking that “Work is Good”, you have essentially laid down the groundwork to begin on this path of being happy and fulfilled at work.

As we discussed earlier, your ability to be successful at work does not depend on others (my boss is uncooperative, my office is too small, etc) but that it comes internally from you. Here is a “real life example” of someone embracing the “Work is Good” mentality despite outside interference:

Nationwide Manager of an IT Company

This young lady started off as an executive in a renowned IT global corporation and quickly climbed up the corporate ladder. While she was there, she won an award as an excellent worker and was later promoted to a managerial position. After some time of being a manager, a new local boss came on board.

This particular boss was often difficult to work with and was perhaps too extremely result-orientated. Under the pressure of increasing sales and boosting revenue, he would often intimidate and belittle his people into meeting these results. It would be understandable, that under these circumstances, if this lady would have felt defeated and overwhelmed, underperforming instead. However, in a classic example of someone that subscribes to the “ Work is Good “ mindset, she believed in her work and found purpose in it, choosing to look at it positively while looking after the objectives of the company.

She didn’t just position herself into performing but she performed well above expectations.

Being in the right frame of mind is an advantage and a choice. Choosing to believe that “ Work is Good “ alters the perception and can change an ordinary career into excellent. And this bears to be repeated, deciding your mindset is a choice.

“The history of free man is never written by Chance but by choice – their choice”²

-Dwight D Eisenhower

The power to make choices is probably one of the most unique features of being human. These choices help us explore the deepest oceans, discover outer space, determine the makeup of precious stones and various other choices to seek. Our civilization has evolved from the Stone Age to an age based on knowledge and technology because of the choices humans have made.

Since this feature is innate within us, the crucial question that we need to answer is;

“How can we make the right choices?”

Making the right choices might be easy for some and quite tricky for others. How we make choices are influenced by the filters that we have. By filters, we mean the values that we have been exposed to and subscribe to, ones that we have learned from our environment and experiences, from our parents, our education, our choice of reading material, spiritual inclinations and/or from those around us.





This concept on filters is summed up by Anais Nin (American writer):

“We don’t see things as they are, we see Things as we are.”³

If adopting the mindset that “Work is Good” is still a struggle for you, perhaps learning to “see things” as a happy and successful performer might be an easier thought method to embrace.

Here is what a happy and successful performer “sees” in a situation versus someone without the “Work is Good” mindset.

“ Work is Good “ mindset		Counter mindset that Bars success	
Investing your own time to learn something new is part of being a performer		I do not learn unless the company pays for it.	
Doing something different and better is part and parcel of being a performer		I do not do something new unless told. Even told, it should be at my convenience.	
My salary and benefits are not an entitlement; they are determined by the value that I bring to the market place.		I am entitled to a living at the expense of the company regardless of the value that I bring to the company.	
I do not expect all conditions to be good Before I agree to perform. I do what is Required.		I need the management/boss to be Understanding and colleagues to be nice To me before I go the extra mile.	

“ Work is Good “ mindset	Counter mindset that Bars success
Understanding my work and how it links to the organizational objectives is important. I need to see the big picture. 	My job is in my department and within my role. I am not responsible for what others need to do. 
My work in a larger scope contributes to the greater good of others. 	I am here for the salary only. How my work can contribute is none of my concern. 

The different attributes of the “ Work is Good “ mindset can be likened to fertile soil for a tree to grow. Trees have a Natural tendency to grow towards the sun, and in perfect conditions, they thrive and grow strong and tall. How does that Relate to the subcategories of the “ Work is Good “ mindset? Imagine this:



Therefore, if you have all the attributes of the “Work is Good” mindset then you can thrive and grow towards performance and fulfillment. The more rich and fertile (attributes) the soil (mindset) is, the better the chances of that tree (you) successfully growing (performance and fulfillment).

Spare a Thought

The ability to hear that “Work is Good” may even help us to live longer. We hear often of people that pass away just a few years after retirement. I believe that one of the main reasons this happens is because they lack the perspective of looking forward. 4 Instead of celebrating their retirement, it is instead seen as a downward spiral. They fail to see purpose and fulfillment in their retirement age and slowly sink into depression. Essentially, they give up on living their life to the fullest thus neglecting their health and mental well-being.

With the right mindset, we are most energized at work as it is no longer seen as a chore. We do not feel victimized or unfulfilled, and as we find purpose in what we do, we stop irrationally demanding that the company caters and accommodates our needs alone.

Try this “Work is Good” mindset today, I think you would be surprised at how much more motivated you feel after this Shift in focus!.

Mentors & Role Models

Changing your mindset is just the beginning into this path of fulfillment and success. In addition, I would also strongly encourage you to seek out a mentor and/or role model that prescribes to these same values and are from the same school of thought that “Work is Good” to help inspire you. Think of it as a safety net, an extra assurance of someone to look up to, an example to know that you are on the right path.

What is the difference between a mentor and a role model?

A mentor is actually someone that will be personally involved in guiding you. This is someone that you know that will be communicating with you, someone that will sit down with you to listen as well as offer guidance towards your quest to perform better at work. This mentor can also offer you a third party perspective on how you can improve especially against those that might be in your blind spots that you are unaware of. It is someone that has been in your shoes and has the experience to lead you personally on the path towards success.

On the other hand, a role model does not necessarily have to be someone that you know. In fact, you may not interact with this person. A good example for a role model could be a well-known figure in your field that you only know from a distance but admire their performance in the industry. It is someone that you can emulate and someone that can inspire you to be better at what you do.

If you had to choose between having a mentor or a role model, a mentor is a much more preferable guide to have. The one-on-one guidance and interaction that a mentor can give is far more effective than the emulation of a role model.

The next question is then, how do I find a mentor?

There are basically two ways i.e. (1) the mentor will be assigned to you or (2) you purposefully seek this person out. When joining a new company or moving to a different position, it is common for companies to assign a mentor to an employee especially when there are certain structures in place. Alternatively, there is also the recommended option of seeking out your own mentor. Take courage and ask someone you admire and respect if they would be your mentor.

Spare a Thought

When you are seeking a mentor, there are three important criterias that you should keep in consideration:

1. **The mentor should be of the same gender as you.**
This is especially true if you are married and/or the mentor is married. The distraction of a mentor of the opposite sex is an unnecessary risk, there have been countless stories of affairs that stem from these opposite gender mentors and mentees.
2. **The mentor is invested and willing to give up time to guide you.**
There may be many people willing to be your mentor but they may not necessarily have the time to do so. Be fair, find a workable schedule that will benefit the both of you. Agree on the amount of time you will spend with each other, it may be just a brief phone call or emails or an occasional meet up. A mentor is meant to guide you, not hold your hand every step of the way. Remember that as you manage your expectations of this relationship.
3. **The mentor shares the same values you prescribe to.**
When looking for someone to fill this role, make sure that their values and morals line up with what you believe in. You are looking for someone to inspire and guide you, this inadvertently gives them the power to influence your thoughts. Make sure it is someone that you would be comfortable being associated with.

The kind of wisdom and support that you will gain from your mentor will depend on your interaction with each other. Be smart about the questions you ask and listen closely to the feedback you get as well. The following are some good questions to start with in order to extract the mentor’s secrets to the joy of being a performer .

Questions	The Purpose
What was the turning point of your success?	To learn from what they have learned and to relate it to the key areas in their work that are similar to yours. Knowing them will help you structure your path of success.
What are the things that you used to struggle with and how Did you overcome them?	To be able to relate their previous struggles with your current struggles and to find similarities that will help you overcome or minimize this
What are the 3 main areas that you focus on to make this job a success?	To learn how and what they focus on and to compare to see if you are putting your focus on the right things.
How do you know when you have done a great job? What are the signs?	To be able to recognize and celebrate success when it happens. Learning this will also help you visualize clearer what success look like and help you plan accordingly.
From a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being least successful and 10 being most successful) how much success do you think you have achieved?	To learn how others gauge success and to form how you will gauge your own success. Hearing the intentions and focus that other people have for themselves might motivate you to work harder at improving on certain areas, especially if your work is similar to theirs.

Life Bite #4: The Mentor

We had the privilege of meeting this successful consultant through the introduction of a mutual friend. His work has brought him all over the world and into many large corporations. He has established himself enough that he works less but still brings home even more than he has before.

At our first meeting, my partner and I had just started our people development business. Through him, we were inspired and saw a future doing what we loved, helping people to enjoy their work and still be able to support ourselves. While talking to him, he opened our eyes to significant changes that we could make in our program. By brainstorming with him, we were able to gain and expand different perspectives that helped us develop our consultancy.

Meeting him and his wife was so significant for us that our consultancy went through a “repositioning” to implement the different ideas and philosophies that they taught us. For us, having a mentor enabled us to visualize and plan the path leading to our future. This didn’t just educate us, but it also energized and motivated us towards a successful people development consultancy.

“ I will use my inner motivation to move forward and be independent “

Inner motivation is something that stems from deep within that pushes us forward during the lowest lows and buoys us through the highest highs. It is our inner little voice that believes and has faith in ourselves and our future, pressing us to keep going even when things seem bleak or tedious.

Some also describe inner motivation as a lifeline. It is believed having faith in the future or something to look forward to can save a person's life. Victor Frankl has widely written on this subject based on his personal experience in a concentration camp during World War II. He says that “once a prisoner loses faith in the future, he dies”.⁵

Although the motivation to be a performer at work is not as intense as trying to survive concentration camp, we can draw parallels from this example. A person that believes in their work and has inner motivation has a far better success rate over someone that doesn't.

I bet you can point out your coworkers that have a spring to their step and always seem to have a plan or a project that they are looking forward to implementing. What about you? Are you excited at work or are you dragging your feet? What propels you forward? What invigorates you at work and what makes you persevere through the trials?

The following are examples of people that are passionate about what they do and have found their inner motivation. Perhaps you could draw parallels and find yours.

Example 1 : My nephew had just gotten the latest state of the art video game console and he couldn't wait to play it. He would approach these marathon sessions of intense gaming with energy and enthusiasm. He would spend hours trying to master the game, trying and trying again to get to a new level or break a certain code, his mind was fully engaged in this process and he was enthusiastic about all the hours spent achieving this. For my nephew, this was his “inner motivation” at work. We see a similar intensity with people who enjoy their work.

Example 2 : During my law practice, I remember spending countless hours preparing documents for a variety of cases ranging from getting clients out of unfair deals, shareholder disputes, fending off ailing companies' creditors for restructuring purposes and so on. My inner motivation that propelled me forward was the hope that a favorable outcome would be reached. This “hope” energized and motivated me as hours and hours ticked by.

Example 3 : This story is from a participant that was at one of our trainings. He was a globe-trotting engineer that would work on projects around the world. Single and adventurous, he enjoyed this lifestyle of being stationed in different parts of the world, working on a project for months even though he spent very little time in his home country between projects. Then, he fell in love and married a girl rooted in his home country. The distance and time away from his home country wasn't fun anymore and he wanted to build on their relationship together. He risked the stability of his job and asked for the company to keep him at home. Not only did they grant him his wish, but he also received a promotion at the same time!

However, he had to change the way he worked, this time tied to a desk job that required a lot more coordination and management over doing. He also had to readjust his carefree lifestyle to something more structured and rigid. Despite it all, his coworkers were impressed at his motivation and success in transitioning. He thrived in this position because he had the inner motivation of believing in what he was doing which was to stay in the country and spend time with his wife.

Spare a Thought

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (Psychology professor) would define that when someone enjoys their work so much that time seems to pass by quickly, as “Flow”. These are moments that one can be fulfilled when the task is balanced with one’s ability.⁶

Having reviewed the examples above, ask yourself what you related to within each example. Was there a particular motivation that you identified with? Perhaps this is what your inner motivation is drawn to and what you should focus on.

In order to give you a clearer picture, I have split the focus of the three individual’s experiences into three separate categories highlighting their primary motivation. In the next exercise, jot down your thoughts and explore what yours might be.

Category One	Events associated with this Category	Does this Motivate you? If yes, what is this project/ goal/target etc. for you?
Sense of Achieving an objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Projects, awards<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career path• Visibility from top<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helping others• Recognition• Fulfilling a target/goal<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotion• Influencing good values or fulfilling noble deeds	It is my (Your turn to write)

Category Two	Desires associated with this Category	Does this Motivate you? If yes, what is this project/ goal/target etc. for you?
Sense of wanting to be a part of a group or family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To be with family or strengthening it• Be part of a winning team• Be part of a group that do what You believe in	The group is (Your turn to write)

Category Three	Results associated with this Category	Does this Motivate you? If yes, what matters to you more i.e. to obtain?
Having the ability to provide for my physical wants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary increase • Share options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New office • Getting a car 	It is the (Your turn to write)

Which category motivates you the most? You may identify with elements from all three categories but you should be drawn to a particular category the most. That is your primary motivation . Use this as your focus for your inner motivation to drive you to look forward. Once you have “it”, you will be able to motivate yourself towards “it”. From now onwards make it a point for “it” to drive you forward and let your everyday actions complement “it”.

Take note also that “it” may also change with time. Different experiences, maturity and the discovery of new purpose/ meaning (like spirituality) may influence our end goal as we pass through the different stages in life.

Stage	Needs	Possible Primary Motivation
Just Started a Career Age: 20 - 30	Require money for a car, clothes and socializing/courtship	Having the ability to provide for my physical wants
Starting a Family Age: 30 - 40	Setting up a family, setting up a house and having children	Sense of wanting to be a part of a group or family
Wanting to be significant & purposeful Age: 40 - 55	Experienced and known in the industry. Children grown up and you are financially stable	Sense of Achieving an objective/ significance

Discipline



Having the inner motivation to succeed is just one side of the coin. The other is about discipline. Discipline is the perseverance and ability to press forward regardless of temporary setbacks. Setbacks have a way of turning up when we least expect it. It is also nature's way of teaching us lessons of what to do in an unexpected situation.

“No one ever reached any eminence and no one having reached it ever maintained it, without discipline”

William Barclay 7

“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering (setback) produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope”

Bible (New International Version), Romans 5: 3 - 4

Spare a Thought

People grow and change when they confront setbacks and overcome them. This is the main premise of the famous international adventure program, *Outward Bound* founded by Kurt Hahn. 8

The wisdom and key behind handling setbacks is actually within us. It is how we choose to respond to it. The outcome is entirely within our control and up to us. The choices we will make, the response we will give it, the acceptance or denial of our circumstance and the things that we will do or not do to overcome it. We control what we can control i.e.

1. The actions leading up to what we want to produce (reports, events, quotas etc.)
2. The reaction we choose at the outcome whether it is a success or setback. Either way, we should treat it as a Lesson learned and move forward.

Life Bite #5: When One Door Closes, Another Opens

One of our dreams when we first started our people development consultancy was to provide our training and services to one particular low cost airline. We believe in ourselves and our company and believed that what we had to offer was a good fit with where this company was heading.

Unfortunately, we had no connections to this company and didn't know anyone that could put us within the same network or the people in this company that could engage our services. We tried a number of ways to connect with this company even cold-calling and attempting to speak to the CEO. Finally, we resorted to emailing our pitch for a meeting through a generic email address that was given to us by the CEO's personal assistant. We strategized and compiled a short and concise email (1) introducing ourselves. (2) recognizing the company's current goals and direction and lastly but the most important of all (3) pitching our services as an investment. To our delight, the company called us in to talk over our ideas. The meeting went well and led to more meetings and discussions before we were unfortunately told that our services were not required by the company at this stage in time.

This setback was extremely disappointing as we had invested a significant amount of time and resources courting them. Thankfully, our response was to brush off the rejection and to view it as a temporary setback, letting our inner motivation fuel us instead into keeping focused on the end goal which was to be a successful people development consultancy.

There were other companies that could use our services and instead of wasting our energy on this closed door, we could shift this energy to pursuing others.

Through discipline and a spirit of “keep at it”, we have since consulted, coached and trained a number of companies based on the philosophies and training that we had envisioned for this low cost carrier. Although not how we envisioned it when we created this material, the results have been extremely encouraging.

Setbacks might sometimes be demoralizing but it is also very much temporary if we choose to respond to it appropriately.

Our actions and reactions to what led to the setback are lessons that we can apply for the future and our actions and reactions to what happens after the setback are how we carve our future.

Life Bite #6: Attitude

We met with this senior manager when we were coaching at a manager development program at the public listed company he was attached to. A senior manager of facilities, this man proved his ability and talent when he spearheaded a project to relocate a big group of people in the company to a bigger location with better facilities and room for growth. Through appointed coaching sessions, he shared his detailed and well thought out plan to implement this relocation. He had spent a significant amount of time charting out the move, focusing on the details as well as the big picture to ensure success. This was met favorably by management and he was encouraged. However, at the last minute and during a crucial approval, he hit a major setback when his CEO was apprehensive about signing off on a few million dollars for this complex relocation. The CEO wanted the senior manager’s proposals to be taken and reviewed by an external consultant to weigh the feasibility and pros and cons of such a move.

The senior manager’s response to this setback was commendable. He did not complain but agreed to work with the external consultant. But more so than that, the senior manager invested the same amount of discipline and tenacity in working with the external consultant. With patience and steadfastness on the senior manager’s part and additional recommendations from the external consultant, the proposals were finally adopted and the relocation was signed off for implementation.

Because of his discipline and optimistic response to the setback and the successful implementation of the relocation, the senior facility manager is prized for his skills, experience and attitude.


**“If you hear a voice within you say ‘you can’t paint’,
then by all means paint, and
that voice will be silenced”**


Vincent Van Gogh

There are two key points to remember in regards to **inner motivation** and **discipline**:


1. Find what motivates your “it” and successfully capture “it” by focusing and complimenting your everyday actions and decisions towards “it”;
2. Be mindful of setbacks, practice the discipline to persevere and consciously choose to respond positively.

Summary of Chapter 2

 Two great mindsets for work i.e. (1) Work is Good, (2) I have my inner motivation.

 Work is Good ;

- It is a choice to adopt this perspective;
- It is the catalyst for performance and being fulfilled;
- Having a mentor is setting up the foundation of this mindset and gives us a reference point of success.

 I have my inner motivation;

- It is to have something to look forward to;
- Self motivation could be (a) a sense of achieving an objective, (b) a sense of wanting to belong and/or (c) having the ability to provide for physical wants.
- How we are motivated also depends on the stage of life that we are in.
- Motivation alone is not enough, discipline is equally important. It is an ability to press forward, despite any Setbacks.

References

6. Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience. New York: Harper and Row
7. William Barclay, The Gospel of Matthew
8. Kurt Hahn (5 June 1886 - 14 December 1974) was a German educator.
9. Vincent Van Gogh (30 March 1853 - 29 July 1890) was a Dutch post-Impressionist famous painter.