

Making Work Suck Less: Healing Workplaces Through Play

Jeff Harry
Positive Psychology Play Speaker



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Attunement



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Attunement



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Building The Work Playground

Why Does Work
Suck Now?

What Initial Steps Need To Be
Taken To Build Back Trust?

How Can We Measure
Progress in Healing A
Workplace?

What Are You
Willing To Do First?



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Built The Largest LEGO-Inspired STEM Organization In The U.S.

- Play (No Business Plan)
- Intuition (Picked Fun People)
- Prioritized people over profit
- Followed Our Curiosity
- Focused On Inspiring Staff

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What Is Play?



Play Is Any Joyful Act That Has No Specific Purpose or Result...

Where You Are Fully Immersed In The Moment

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What Is Play?



*Play Is The Opposite
of Perfection*

*Play is rooted in curiosity,
experimentation, a sense of
wonder*

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**You'll find the
future where
people are
having fun.**

STEVEN JOHNSON



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Google
20%
Time

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Google AdSense



Gmail



Google Maps



Google News

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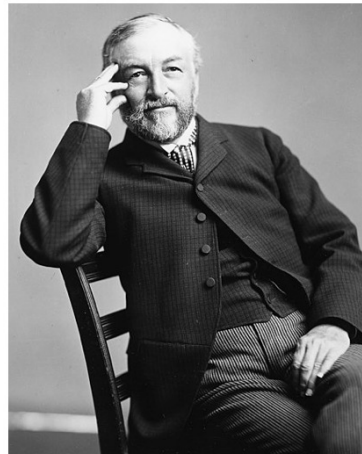
Play Is Where Innovation Thrives



Wright Brothers

Vs.

Samuel Pierpoint Langley

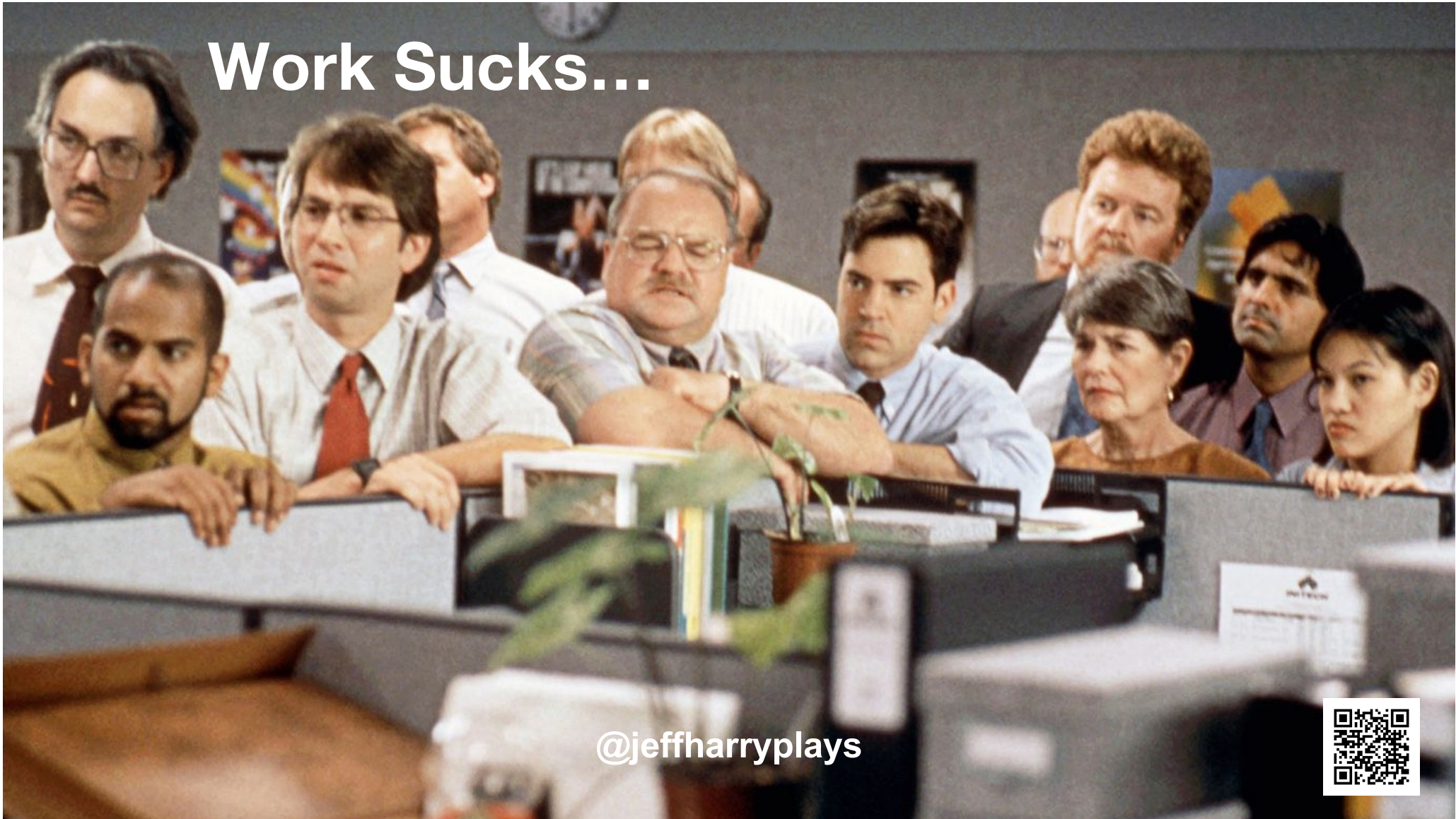


- **Competed Against The Wright Brothers To Create The First Flying Apparatus**
- **Received \$2.5 Million By The War Department**
- **Had Access To The Top Scientists & Engineers At The Smithsonian**
- **Quit After 2 Failed Flight Attempts**

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Work Sucks...



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Employees Feel Used


☰ 🔍 **BUSINESS INSIDER**

US MARKETS OPEN
▲ DOW JONES -0.04% ▼ NASDAQ +0.33% ▼ S&P 500 +0.26% ▼ META +1.58% ▼ TSLA +0.9%

TECH

Some Google employees didn't realize they were laid off until their badges wouldn't let them into the office

Aaron Mok, Kate Duffy, and Sawdah Bhaimiya Jan 25, 2023, 2:49 AM MST [Share](#) | [Save](#)



Employees Feel Disrespected

Entrepreneur

Sign In

Sephora Hit \$10 Billion in Revenue and Workers Aren't Happy That All They Got Was a 'Stale Cookie'

Reddit users called it the "infamous cookie."

BY JORDAN HART • FEB 7, 2024

Share

Key Takeaways

- ▶ Sephora North America shattered records with \$10 billion in sales in 2023.
- ▶ But workers at the beauty chain were disappointed to just get cookies to celebrate the milestone.
- ▶ An employee who got the cookies told Business Insider they were "stale."



Employees Feel Exploited



The Productivity–Pay Gap

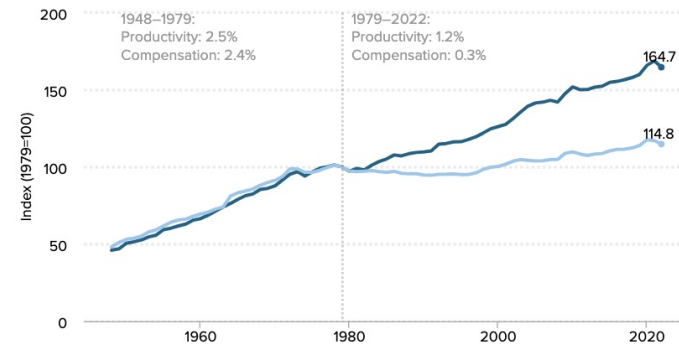
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Updated October 2022

Most Americans believe that a rising tide should lift all boats—that as the economy expands, everybody should reap the rewards. This outcome can be guaranteed by smart and compassionate policy choices or subverted by policymakers choosing a different path. EPI's Productivity–Pay Tracker shows the shift toward the latter: Since the late 1970s, our policy choices have led directly to a pronounced divergence between productivity and typical workers' pay. It doesn't have to be this way.

The gap between productivity and a typical worker's compensation has increased dramatically since 1979

Productivity growth and hourly compensation growth, 1948–2022



[Chart](#) [Data](#)

Notes: Data are for compensation (wages and benefits) of production/nonsupervisory workers in the private sector and net productivity of the total economy. "Net productivity" is the growth of output of goods and services less depreciation per hour worked.

Source: EPI analysis of unpublished Total Economy Productivity data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Labor Productivity and Costs program, wage data from the BLS Current Employment Statistics, BLS Employment Cost Trends, BLS Consumer Price Index, and Bureau of Economic Analysis National Income and Product Accounts.

Economic Policy Institute

Productivity–Pay Tracker

Change 1979–2022:

Productivity

+64.7%

Hourly pay

+14.8%

Productivity has grown 4.4x as much as pay



Work Sucks, But It Doesn't Have To



What Do Employees Want?

**Staff Want To Feel
Seen, Appreciated & Heard**

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Question Worth Asking #1

**What Do You Need To Feel
Seen, Heard, & Appreciated?**

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Question Worth Asking #1

**What Do You Do To Ensure
Your Staff Feel Seen, Heard, &
Appreciated?**

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Making The Work Playground Safe



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Making The Work Playground Safe

Ready For The Hard Questions?



Question Worth Asking #2

What Values Are Communicated Through Your Team's Actions?

Entrepreneur Sign In


Sephora Hit \$10 Billion in Revenue and Workers Aren't Happy That All They Got Was a 'Stale Cookie'

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OR


npr **WBEZ** CHICAGO NEWSLETTERS SIGN IN NPR SHOP DONATE

NEWS CULTURE MUSIC PODCASTS & SHOWS SEARCH

BUSINESS

Spanx CEO surprises every employee with 2 first-class plane tickets and \$10,000

UPDATED OCTOBER 26, 2021 · 8:38 PM ET By Tien Le



Sara Blakely (shown here in 2013) is the founder of Spanx. The womenswear company was valued at \$1.2 billion in a recent sale.
Paul Morigi/Getty Images North America

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**Work Culture Is Defined By
The Worst Behavior
Tolerated - John Amaechi**

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Nobody wants to work anymore...



Nobody wants to work anymore...

with them.



Question Worth Asking #3

**Which Managers Should Not
Be Leading People?**

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LEADERSHIP · MANAGEMENT ADVICE

Nearly all bosses are ‘accidental’ with no formal training—and research shows it’s leading 1 in 3 workers to quit

BY **ORIANNA ROSA ROYLE**
October 16, 2023 at 4:47 AM PDT



The Chartered Management Institute's research found that although one in four people in the workforce have management responsibilities, very few have been trained to do their jobs.

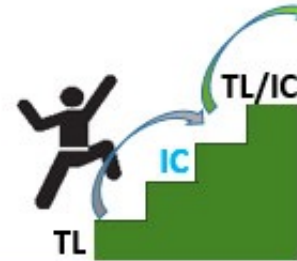
LUIS ALVAREZ—GETTY IMAGES

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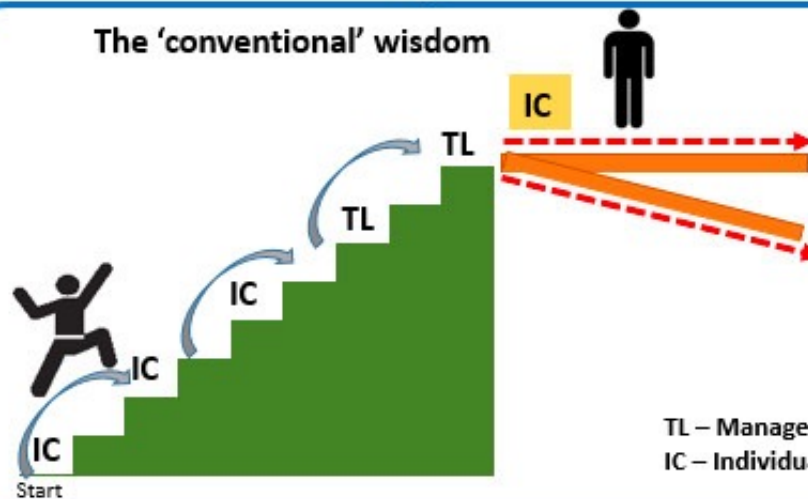
From Manager to an Individual Contributor - A step 'Backward' 'Forward'!

The 'new' wisdom



Opportunities for Team Lead as well as Individual Contributor – It's your choice

The 'conventional' wisdom



TL – Manager or Team Leader
IC – Individual Contributor

As per Conventional wisdom, it is a natural progression to *always* move from an Individual contributor to a Manager /Team Leader role. But as per the 'New' wisdom, it is ok to move from a Manager to an Individual Contributor ('By-Choice' cases) as long as you can justify your move and showcase how you utilized this move to the maximum.





We Are All Feeling Burnout

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We Are All Feeling Burnout

- **Doing The Job of 2 - 3 People**
- **Impossible Deadlines**
- **Consistently Working Late**
- **Overly Demanding Supervisors**

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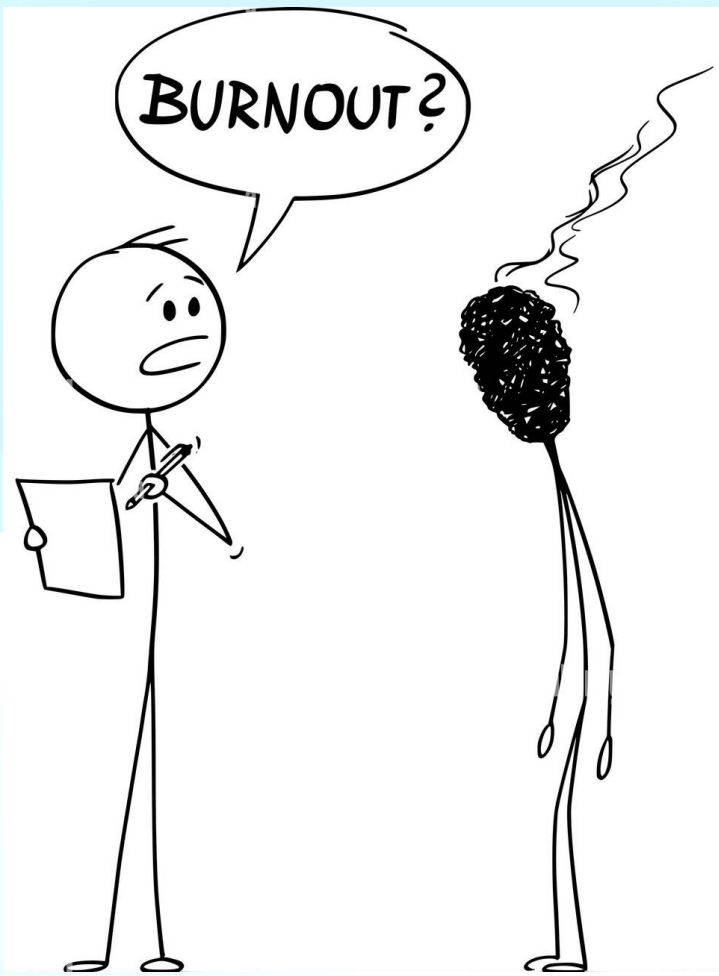


What Issues Are You Facing?

- Staff Resistance To Change
- Lack of Leadership Support
- Culture Clash
- Communication Breakdowns

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YOGA
Happy Hour
Pizza Party
Therapy

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Question Worth Asking #4

**Are You Addressing
Systemic Issues With
Individual Solutions?**

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The Work Playground Is Safe



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To Feel Seen

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Play Experiment: Explore Your Impact

Write Down What You Do Best At Work

Celebrate!

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Play Experiment: Explore Your Why

**How many people's lives have you
impacted this year in positive way?**

Directly & Indirectly

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Play Experiment: Explore Your Why

**Think of your most memorable &
meaningful moment this year where you
impacted someone in a positive way**

(Felt the most connected to your work)

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D O S E

DOPAMINE THE REWARD CHEMICAL

- Completing a task
- Doing self-care activities
- Eating food
- Celebrating little wins



OXYTOCIN THE LOVE HORMONE

- Playing with a dog
- Playing with a baby
- Holding hand
- Hugging your family
- Give compliment



SEROTONIN THE MOOD STABILIZER

- Meditating
- Running
- Sun exposure
- Walk in nature
- Swimming
- Cycling



ENDORPHIN THE PAIN KILLER

- Laughter exercise
- Essential oils
- Watch a comedy
- Dark chocolate
- Exercising



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To Feel Heard

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Address The water Pressure Issues



Question Worth Asking #5: What Are Your Water Pressure Issues?



To Feel Appreciated

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What Is Your Language of Appreciation?

Tangible Gifts



Quality Time



Words of Affirmation



Acts of Service



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What Is Your Language of Appreciation?

Tangible Gifts



Quality Time



Words of Affirmation



Acts of Service



How Would You Like To Receive Recognition?

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**Humans
Wanted To
Be Treated
Like Humans**

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FORCED FUN SUCKS

Why do a number of organizations
keep at it?



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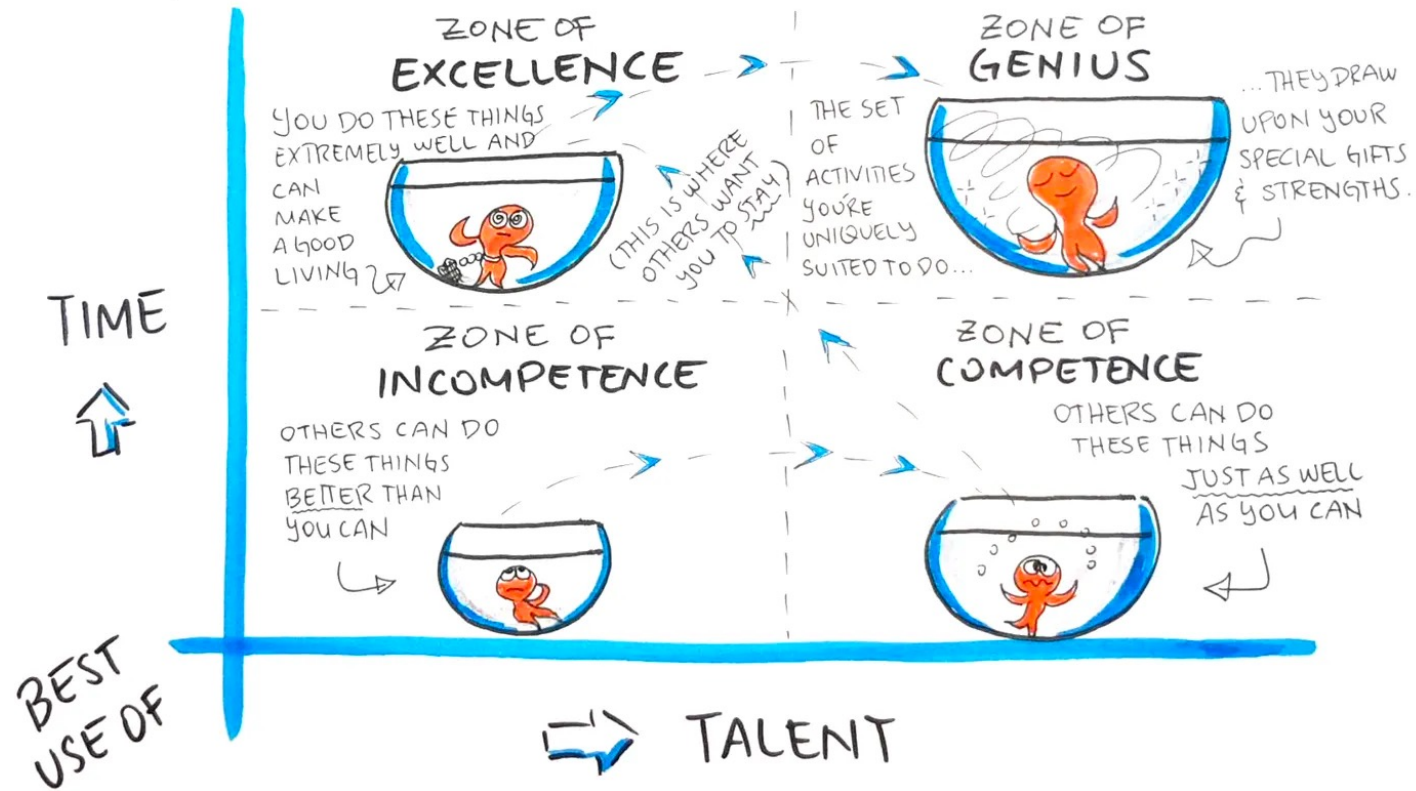


Zone of Genius/Flow State

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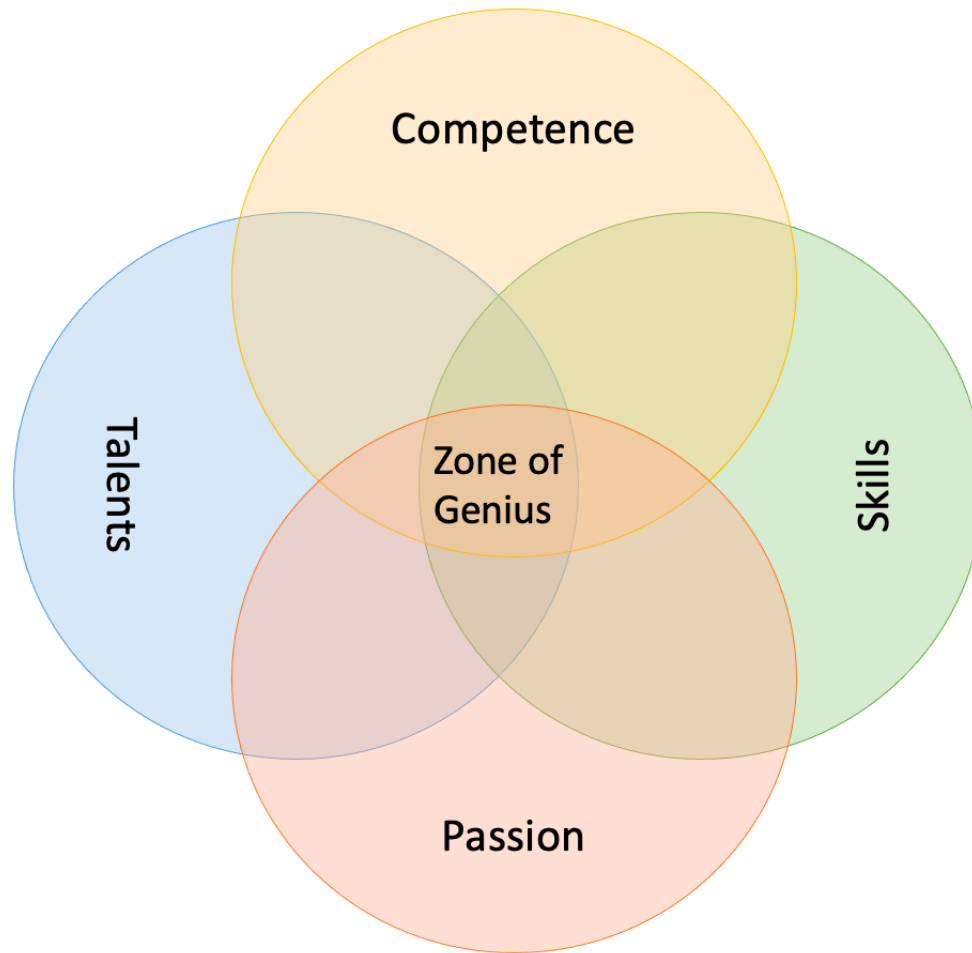
THE BIG LEAP



Source: The Big Leap by Gay Hendricks (published 2009), p. 29, 31, 33, 34

Infographic by Anaik





What Is Flow?

“

The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something that we make happen. –

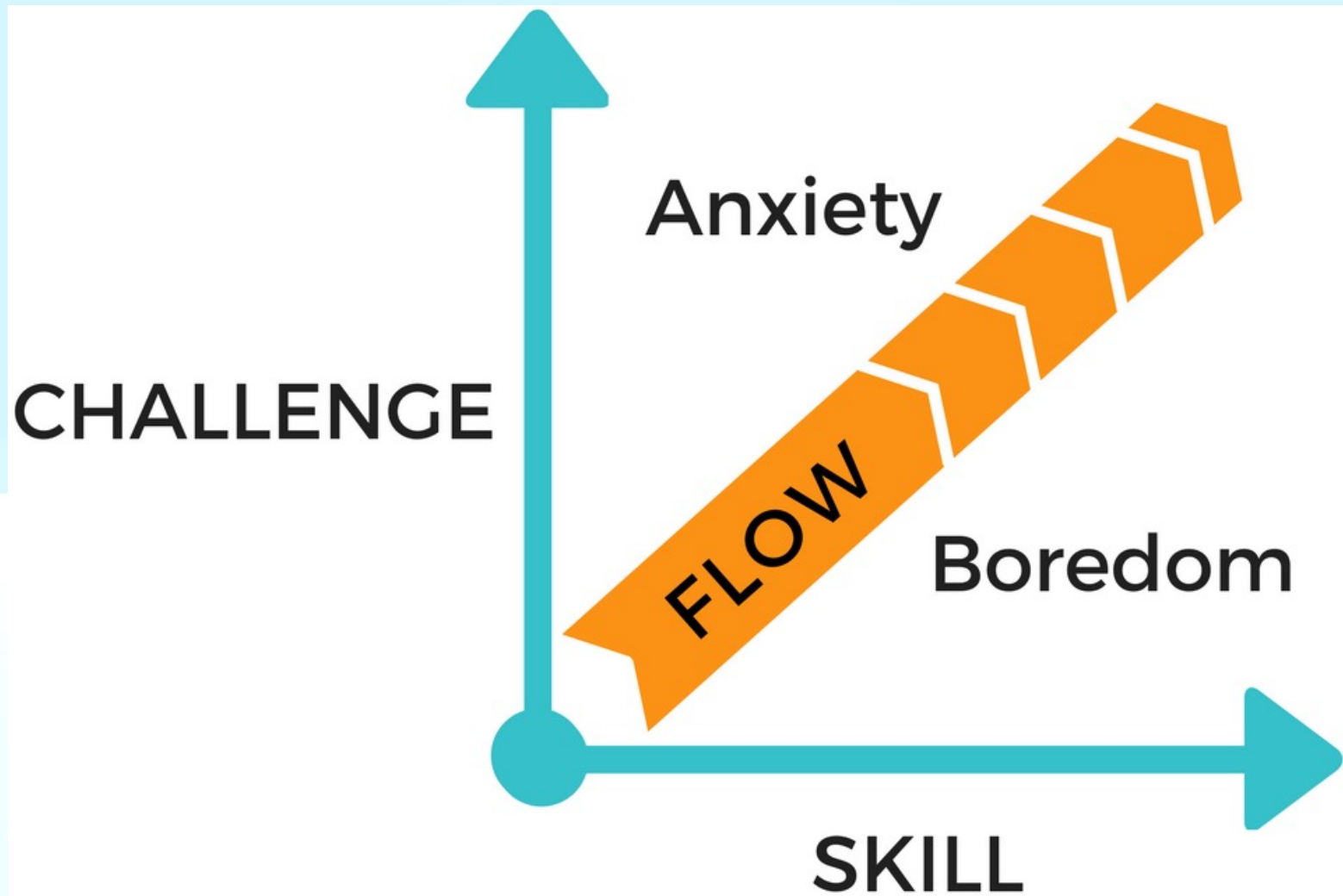
Flow



Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

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What Is Your Staff's Zone of Genius/Flow?

**What is the work you do where
you forget about time?**

**What is the work you'd do even if
you weren't get paid for it?**

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Making Work Suck Less Through Play: Questions Worth Asking

- **What Do You Do To Ensure Your Staff Feel Seen, Heard, & Appreciated?**
- **What Values Are Communicated Through Your Team's Actions?**
- **Which Managers Should Not Be Leading People?**
- **Are You Addressing Systemic Issues With Individual Solutions?**
- **What Are Your Water Pressure Issues?**
- **What Is Your Language of Appreciation?**

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Who Will Decide The Future of Work?

Who Will Decide The Future of Work?

**Old School
Leadership**

Individualism

Competition

Control

Ego

**Human-Centered
Leadership**

Shared Humanity

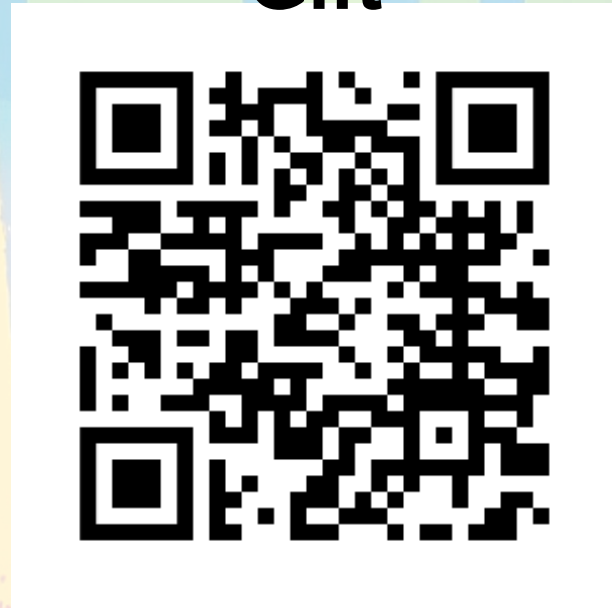
Collaboration

Inspiration

Intuition



Thanks So Much For Playing!
Access To
Studies & Bonus
Gift



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