



The High Performance Workplace

***How to take all your workplace's time
wasting activities, tiring processes and
frustrating miscommunications ...
and turn them into more focus, energy, ideas
and results.***

By Elliot Hayes

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The challenge is growing – people have to achieve even more with even less.

Instead of being a casualty of change, a stressed out worker – I want to help you lead the way in creating and fostering your own innovative, high performance workplace.

Creating a high performance workplace that thrives on being focused, innovative, open and energised – is worth the journey in personal satisfaction, fun and profit.

It's certainly much easier than NOT creating one. You end up wasting more time, energy and money.

Who is this for?

This is for you if:

- You have goals, targets to achieve, and you're juggling many different priorities
- You can feel time flying and you have a sense of urgency to achieve what you want now!
- You know deep down there is more to be achieved from your team, your resources, your time and your communications (in simplest terms, you're leaving money on the table)
- You have to communicate or collaborate with colleagues, staff or stakeholders and keeping their focus on the main message and priorities is a challenge
- You're challenged by the speed of change, the complexity of your business in today's marketplace, and the number of interruptions along the way

What's in it for YOU to read this?

Short terms wins AND Long term gains

Whether you're a manager, or an individual seeking to get more out of yourself to lead by example, this is a manual you can immediately use to start looking for 'low hanging fruit' that increases your performance of your workplace.

It will also pave the way for longer term policies, procedures and cultural changes you want to embed in your workplace.

Since we've worked with thousands of people across dozens of different industries it's impossible to distill all we know into one report.

This is an excellent foundation for you to get started.

With all due respect to my 'management consulting' colleagues, if you've ever read any kind of research report you'll know how it's difficult to identify the specific action steps you can take that are within your control.

In this report, each section has **takeaways** with action points to implement. I encourage you to treat this as a manual to work from. One with incremental changes you can test and measure to see how they impact your workplace.



Before we get started, picture these scenarios and see which ones sound familiar. Remember, every situation is based on real events. Every situation represents money, time and energy being wasted.

Your inbox goes 'Ping' with the arrival of a new email. You ignore it. You're in the middle of doing something. Then a moment later the sender of the email appears at your desk. "Sorry to interrupt," he says with a smile. "I'm just checking, did you get my email?"

You come up with a great idea for your team. You head off to your boss to share with it, your boss smiles and says, 'Great idea'. A week later it's forgotten.

Your computer freezes because you've got so many applications open. So you reboot. But, have you ever had the same experience mentally?

You come into work and think, "That report has to be done. But it's going to take a **LONG** time.' So you start on something easier just to warm up. Before you know it, the day is finished, and you're no closer to getting the report done. Just thinking about the BIG task stresses you out.

Your manager asks you (via email) to give a talk to the other managers at the next conference. You're sweating bullets just thinking about it. The topic is very broad. You're really worried it's going to bore them. Presenting to colleagues feels daunting. You decide to create a PowerPoint to help you.

You sit down at the start of the day to write down your to do list. Your to do list from last week is still on your desk. You tried Outlook Tasks for a little while, but it didn't quite work out. The post-it notes around your monitor seem like a better way to go.

The reminder in Outlook pops up, and you glance at it. The task it's reminding you of was due six months ago. You laugh to yourself. One of your colleagues had a pop-up reminder during his presentation to the board. The task he was being reminded of was from two years ago.

The day after your presentation, you follow up your colleague to see what they thought. You ask them what they took from it. As you listen to their answer, you realise they've missed the whole point.



Your co-worker across the room is one of those morning people. They bound into work all hyped up. You HATE mornings. You've noticed that you tend to be most alert in the afternoon, after lunch. Ah well.

You call a customer back on their mobile, but it goes to voicemail. You leave a message asking them to call back. They do, but you're already on the phone. So phone tag continues for the rest of the day.

You're trying to create a visual in Microsoft Excel to demonstrate the data. But this new version is slightly confusing. Nothing is where it used to be. Guess you'll have to do it the slow way.

Every Friday you stay at home to work. It save times on the daily commute, and you can get so much more done. BUT when your colleagues work from home, you find it very hard to **track** them.

You wake up and you can barely raise your head. You haven't been out partying. It's just the stress of your job is making you feel bone tired. You call in sick, and **try** to relax.

It's your first day with the new team. You have a five minute induction. You notice that everyone on the team seems to 'CC' everyone else with their emails. Guess that's the way it's done around here.

You see a colleague in the staff kitchen, and you tell about your great idea on how to improve the reporting process. Your colleague loves it. Then he says, 'Hey, let's have a meeting to discuss it further'.

You do a quick email check on your iphone. There's an email with the heading 'Re: hello'. As you scroll down, you find what you were meant to see. You need to call John asap on this number. Lucky you kept scrolling.

You book into one of the meeting rooms for an hour to have time to yourself. A bit of 'ME TIME". You sit down, look at your notebook, and the first thing you notice is... it's so quiet. Too quiet.

A new staff member begins today. You glance at their computer screen, and you notice they've set up some kind of handy view on their Calendar. "How did you do that? 'you ask. They show you the technique, and you vaguely wonder what else it could do if only you had the time to learn about it.



A High Performance Workplace – what does it mean?

Get specific and define what it means to YOU

What that involves is firstly identifying with the leaders of the business exactly what does a high performance workplace look like to them?

That's driven by the culture, strategic plan, the vision for the organisation.

So we ask the question, "If you could wave the magic wand and make the workplace whatever you wanted – what would that look like?"

"What does a high performance work place look like for you and your team and your resources in your industry based on the things you want to achieve?"

The answer is different for everyone, but there are four key principle areas we have identified that are critical to having a high performance work place.

Number one – Communication

This refers to both internal and external communication.

Number two – Technology

This is about having some kind of mastery of technology. You don't have to be an I.T. guru. You just need to know enough to get along.

Even if that is as simple as making the most of Microsoft Office or in more complex ways having software that is designed specifically for what you need for your particular fulfillment requirements.

Number Three – Productivity

How do you use your time? How well can you prioritise and focus?

Number Four – Innovation

We found that one of the things that make more fun, more solution focused, more cutting-edge is by having innovations. How easily can you generate new ideas? How do you assess and action them?



Let's break each one down with more specifics and some practical tips you can use to help optimise your workplace.

Communication

Take emails as an example.

The majority of emails that people receive on average are from their colleagues, internally rather than externally.

When we talk about communication, we're really talking about the connection between what you intend to say and the impact of what you DO say.

Consider the following sentence:

I didn't say she stole from me

I **didn't** say she stole from me

I didn't **say** she stole from me

I didn't say **she** stole from me

I didn't say she **stole** from me

I didn't say she stole **from** me

I didn't say she stole from **me**

And that's just in writing. That's not even considering the tone of your voice if you're talking live.

Assertiveness in all areas

We're also talking about the level of assertiveness in the organisation.

Is there a clear ability to communicate in writing and in person what you want to get across?

It has been said that people don't leave organisations, they leave bad managers. Open communication is critical.

Your Voice

When it comes to communication, the main tool you have is your voice. Have you honed your voice? It's your number one tool – how much training or practice have you given it?

Whenever I test out my clients in this area, the first thing I notice is that their breathing is all wrong. It undermines the attempts to have a powerful voice, but usually they don't even realise it.



If you've ever heard President Obama speak and notice what a resonant voice he has – well, that's down to the technique. As a comparative example, President Clinton, who has a load of charisma, does not have this technique down pat. Consequently, his voice wears out more quickly.

What's the main technique? Here it is:

Next time you're about to say something important, take a deep breath and focus on the words coming from the diaphragm instead of the throat/voice box. You'll be amazed at the difference it makes.

If you doubt me, check out a baby when they're sleeping. You'll notice their diaphragm is breathing in and out, not so much their chest. That's how they can be so small, but also so...loud! There is power in breathing properly when you use your voice.

What is your story?

What is the company's story? What is your team's story? What is the narrative? The main message you really want to get out there?

If someone asks you what you're working on, what do you say?

If you're like most people, you just give across information. That sounds logical, but it misses the point that:

A – it can be boring

B – people are so overloaded with information that you need more power in your communication to make an impact

Here's a great tip that could completely change the way you communicate.

Use the Power of Stories

Tell stories. We love stories.

You'll notice that stories have a very specific structure – beginning, middle and end. That sounds simple, but have you noticed when some people seem to get stuck in the middle, and it goes on forever?

The key with stories is to make them interesting. And the key to making sure you don't bore people OR leave out important information is to **use the structure.**

There's a great book called '*Wake me up when the data is over*' – and it's about this very issue.

Now if you're not confident as a story teller, then I'd suggest you leverage those who have gone before you. A great tip I've used myself, and often share with others is to go to www.amazon.com and type in the keywords related to your area of expertise.



Want to see a great example? Check out the Steve Jobs speech at Stanford University (which has had millions of YouTube hits). Essentially he tells three stories. That's it. And yet people can't get enough.

You could also look for the top selling publications, and study the description. How do they phrase it? How do they create interest in the topic? How do they make it compelling?

Most importantly, in a business context, they have one important word above all others – **YOU**.

They find the hook that resonates with YOU, the listener. It's a good technique to actually make the word YOU a requirement in the opening line of your story. That will help you keep the audience in mind as you tell your story. You need stories that resonate with your audience (which you constantly need to be learning about).

Think about your project, product, service – how can you link it to a story that engages the other stakeholders? The rest of the team? That gets them interested?

Don Draper - in the entertaining television show 'Mad Men' – says this about bad publicity:

"If you don't like what they're saying then change the conversation."

What is the conversation about? What is your narrative?

The next issue is the technique you use to communicate that.

If you are doing that across webinars, conference calls, face to face, over the phone - each of these requires a certain technique.

A webinar requires a strong voice and a compelling visual (not just a standard PowerPoint).

A conference call requires skill in the way you use words to **create a visual**.

And face to face requires the whole complement of visual, auditory and kinesthetic to engage the audience (in this case, that's usually your team).

Action points to consider for your work:

- when someone asks you what you think of a particular team in your organization, what are the first words that come to mind?
- now reverse it. What are people thinking, saying, feeling about you? Ask someone you trust to give it to you straight
- what is the story you want to share with your team as a motivating compelling message?
- Rehearse. Tell your story to your smartphone recorder, and listen to how it sounds. What would you change?
- Once a day, focus on the breathing coming from your diaphragm. Notice what that does to power of your breath



Technology

Most people who use any type of software use on average about twenty percent of what it can do.

Now, that doesn't mean they have to learn the remaining eighty percent. What it simply means is that there is a gap there between what they need to know and what they do know. The actual figure required for your work might be forty five percent.

People are self taught – and that's a slow way to go

And the knowledge gap is usually being navigated by self-taught individuals who go on YouTube or Google to find the answers. The challenge is that is not often replicated throughout the rest of the teams, the challenge is it is a slow way to learn because you don't know what you don't know and you are being taught in random methods.

You know the odd YouTube video here from a website or blog here and there. And it doesn't really say right, "How do you use this technology at an optimal level to save time, what you now know currently and what are the gaps that we need to build on.

Microsoft Office – a common example

A current example of that is Microsoft Office which is one of the most popular software programs in the modern day working place. And that includes things like Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint; pretty much in that order of usage.

Most people don't know how to use Outlook to effectively manage emails. Most people do not know how to use Excel to effectively create macros and generate powerful, meaningful reports that you can use to communicate well to your target market to your team, to your manager, to your customer.

Confidence does NOT equal Competence

What we are finding is that more people coming to the ranks, joining the workforce are confident with the technology but does not tally that their competence with technology is the same - they don't know what they don't know. Another area related to technology is the use of smart phones.

Every tool has a short cut

Smart phones, tablets like iPad play a major part on how we use technology and connect to technology. There are short-cuts, features, apps within that people don't really use but they could use to save time and does not cost a lot of money to implement.

More tech does NOT equal more time

So technology is a major part, still a big time drain. The most profound simple example of that simply is that one client of ours, the finance manager. His finance team had a day off so he had to hop on the computer to check something in the finance department. He could not believe how long it took for the computer to boot up. So instantly he ordered a new computer that is faster, better, easier.



Action points to consider for your workplace:

- What technology tools do you use regularly?
- What are you assuming about how people use these tools?
- Has there been specific training to address their effective application?
- If you couldn't come to work today, what technology would you use to help get your job done for you?

Notes:



Productivity

The third area is your productivity.

Productivity comes down to five specific factors:

- your focus
- your habits
- your process
- your energy
- (and finally) your momentum

FOCUS

The average person is interrupted every four minutes. Once you're interrupted, how do you come back from that quickly to refocus on what you were doing?

Have you ever considered your ability to FOCUS as a muscle that's just as important as your physical muscles?

Let's consider you have five minutes before an important meeting.

You can't find MORE time. So to be more effective you make MORE of what you have. The key to that is focus.

How do you improve, strengthen and fire up your FOCUS muscles?

HABITS

Ever been to a training session and found that after all those great ideas and promises, nothing has changed? Well that's because your habits are running the race. The saying old habits die hard is not true – they never die!

A reformed smoker will still tell you that they feel like a cigarette in certain circumstances.

But...the habits **can weaken**. They can be overridden by a replacement habit.

So establishing the right habits you want to keep and get rid of is CRITICAL to achieving any new goal.

Let's say a little message goes off alerting them when they have an email. The moment it comes, they stop what they are doing and check the email. That is something that is not good for their focus or productivity.

But they are into the habit of checking their emails the moment it arrives.



PROCESS

Maybe your focus and habits are strong, but your process sucks.

E.g. ever used a to do list? Great, you have a list of what to do. But what's your process of working ***through*** your to do list?

Morning Routine

I had one client who would start the day with the following:

- Read the newspaper
- Check out sport websites
- Chat with colleagues
- Check emails
- Eat breakfast

By 9am he felt drained.

Why?

Because his morning consisted of input. Info, food, chatter – going in.

We refocused it to OUTPUT.

He stopped these steps and replaced them with sending emails OUT.

Getting the report DONE and sent OUT.

Calling OUT to people on the phone to move things forward.

By 9am, he felt energised, and like he'd already achieved so much. And then he was ready for more.

The key was Input versus Output.

What this also highlights is the power of momentum.

Momentum has a power to it that feeds your productivity. It's a drug free high 😊

And this is critical for your **ENERGY**.

Wellness in the workplace is an increasing priority for organisations around the world. But to my mind, it's still not high enough.

It makes sense that if you want to get the most productivity out of people, then they need to have energy.

For obvious reasons, there are limits to what you can discuss with colleagues about their health, as it's not officially any of your business.



What you can do is lead by example and set up an encouraging environment to foster better energy levels.

Energy boosting measures

It can mean:

- Incorporating tai chi/yoga techniques into your day
- Scheduling stretches to interrupt sitting for too long
- Ordering a fruit box delivered to your office
- Having a masseuse come on site to work on each staff member
- Facilitating a simple meditation session for staff to increase their relaxation
- Get ergonomic chairs that support good posture (a huge issue in offices around the world)
- Having stand up meetings (they increase urgency and give more energy to a meeting)
- Stock up on calming, soothing teas in the kitchen along with the standard coffee
- And perhaps most simply, drink more water to stay hydrated
- Use a feng shui expert (if you believe in that kind of philosophy) to assess your working space and adapt it where appropriate
- Or just ask the staff what drains their energy and see what you can do about it

So in terms of ways to get better at the modern way of challenge of being more productive, it really means our ability to prioritise, focus, manage interruptions and have the right habits in place that give us the real momentum in what we are doing.

That is more important than ever in this open plan, highly interrupted workspace we find ourselves in.

Action point to consider for your workplace

- How do you start the day?
- Test a different way to start the day and see if it makes for a better day overall
- Conduct a time audit of two normal working days. Reflect on what it tells you about how you're spending your time
- Turn off the email alert in your office system (Outlook, Lotus, Gmail, they can all be switched off)
- Three times a day, pause your actions for a few seconds and ask yourself, "Is this the best use of my time?"
- Notice what time of the day you (and your staff) seem have the most energy. Is it morning or afternoon? Can you schedule more important tasks for the time period when you're more energised?
- Recall a day when you were absolutely on fire and got more done in the day than most people get done in a week. Now, here's the important part: What were the triggers for that day? Are there any in your control that you could repeat? To foster momentum?



Notes:



Innovation

Have you ever heard the saying, *'Think outside the square'*?

But how do you actually do that? It's all very well for people who are highly creative, but what if you're not? Or what if you were, but now you're stuck?

If you're not making innovation a key part of your culture, then to my mind you're missing out on fun, opportunities, profit and a much greater engagement for yourself and your staff.

One of our clients - right after the GFC – got all the staff together from around the country for two days. In those two days they put every idea on the table from anyone and everyone.

The theme was 'what now?'. Where do we focus? What markets will see us through?

Fast forward two years and their revenue is better than ever.

But here's the key – **the ideas that saved them came from where they least expected**. Staff members came out of nowhere and surprised them. It wasn't all extroverts or salespeople.

What they created was a forum for expressing those ideas.

Innovation underpins all of the areas we've discussed so far.

How do you become more innovative to get your message across?

How can you use your technology in more innovative ways to get more output?

How can I be more innovative in the way I work more and get things done?

How am I innovative in terms of deciding on where we are going to put our energies and where our vision is?

What is the best market or area of the market to focus on that will serve us for the next one, three or five years and beyond? Based on where the trends are flowing?

Define Innovation – what exactly IS IT?

The key to innovation is to define what that means for you.

Does it mean innovation in your process?

Your product offering?

Your value add to your customers?

Your engagement/retention of your staff?



Whatever you decide, innovation generally has four main stages.

One – investigation

What is the challenge, problem or goal you're trying to achieve?

Two – Brainstorming ideas

What are all the whacky, simple, wild ways we could solve or achieve this?

Three – Evaluate

Just because it's an idea, does NOT make it an opportunity. The key is to establish a criteria of time, money and resources against which to assess what's worth pursuing and what's not. That criteria makes assessment sooooo much easier.

Four – Do it

Let's take action. Let's make it happen.

You miss any one of these areas and you're more likely to run in to trouble. But if you factor them into your process, you're stacking the deck in your favour!

Be bold. Test new ideas. Your organisation's future may depend on it.

Action point to consider for your workplace

- Next time you have a team meeting, change the environment. Go to a park, café, gym, yoga studio...someplace ***different***. That in itself can immediately stimulate new ideas
- What is the process for evaluating new ideas that staff bring to the table? Is it random, or is there actually a policy in place to help encourage and evaluate?
- Develop a list of crazy, fun, simple, powerful, whacky questions you ask the team when you get together. The better the question the better the answer. Some companies develop a list bank of questions that can prompt different thoughts and ideas.
- Once or twice a week, as you're doing something boring or repetitive, you can also ask "Is there a better way to do it?"
- Get a guest speaker in to bring a fresh approach. You don't have to agree with them. The point is to open your mind
- Get the whole team together and ask them for twenty ideas on how to improve your workplace. BUT don't get them to present to the group. That can be intimidating. Ask them to write them down anonymously. You'll be surprised what comes out when people feel more relaxed and are not being judged instantly. Don't confuse the phase of 'Generating Ideas' with 'Evaluating Ideas'.

In other words, separate the two phases. I've often seen it where people put forward an idea, and someone else immediately says how it can't work. That's a good way to kill ideas.



In Conclusion...

Is this helping? Are you getting enough practical strategies you can implement?

Just imagine what it would be like if your workplace was more focused, more creative, more effective, more energised, more outcome focused?

What would that mean to your revenue? Your staff retention? Your culture? Your enjoyment levels?

You have the power to influence it. Now get cracking 😊

Thanks for your time.

Elliot Hayes

High Performance Workplace Specialist

Share this report with others:



Do you want FindTime to work with you?

If this report has helped stimulate ideas that could help your workplace, then consider utilising FindTime for more in-depth help. Whether it be in the areas of communication, technology, productivity or innovation – what could we achieve together?

**If you want to find out, check out www.findtime.com.au and go to the 'Contact Us' page.
Or simply email Elliot directly on eth@findtime.com.au**

About the Author

Elliot Hayes has worked across seven different industries – ranging from telecommunications to film and television to corporate training and development.

He has been delivering training programs, coaching sessions and keynote presentations on productivity, sales and communication skills for over ten years.

He has also been a featured speaker for the prestigious 'TEC Group'; a mentorship group for business owners around the world.

Elliot has worked with thousands of people, including some of the top companies in Australia. The key objective was to foster a higher performance workplace.



He has featured in BRW, most recently he was interviewed by 'The Age' and his clients have included carsales.com.au, Australia Post, Telstra, Department of Justice, and Optus, OnePath Financial Services, IPCA, Victoria University and many others. Elliot is also a qualified tai chi instructor and a trained actor.

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Email: eth@findtime.com.au

About Time Management Solutions

Phone: 1300 316 310

www.findtime.com.au

A small sample of what our clients have to say...

'I would thoroughly recommend you consider running the "Time Management" course for your colleagues. It's a course I believe the whole hotel group would benefit from. The time it will save you and the confidence it will give you will be well worth the investment.'

Matthew Young, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Canberra

'The Microsoft Outlook training provided great benefit to our staff so thank you. My only regret is that we should have organized this sooner.'

Jane Robertson - Human Resources Manager Asia Pacific - THQ Asia Pacific Pty. Ltd.

"Elliot has been transformational in helping people manage their email. Some of our members have used him and they've totally cleared their inbox... he doesn't charge much; I don't think he's figured out what he's worth!"

Harvey Martin - Regional Director for "The Executive Connection"

"What a high standard. Fantastic speaker and have been practicing the basics since the session and am amazed at the difference they are making. I was very sceptical that I'd get anything out of such a small amount of time so was really happy and surprised."

Sally Duncan - Coles – Project Management Officer



On behalf of Management & all the staff here at carsales.com.au - I want to say a huge thank-you. It was a fantastic couple of days and the feedback I've received from everyone has been nothing but positive. You have been such a pleasure to work with and I want to thank you for your professionalism. The sessions were informative, engaging and fun and everyone learned from them. But most importantly you made me look good!

Peta Garside @Carsales.com.au

I first sought out Elliot from findtime.com.au because the results I wanted to achieve were learning to structure speeches, presentations and general meetings. Communication is a major part of my job so being able to articulate what I want to say so my message is clear is so important.

The process we went through to get there was challenging and confronting as learning to talk to a group is never easy. The more I learnt with Elliot the more my confidence grew. He helped me understand my audience better and strangely enough really enjoyed it. Elliot did a great job in helping me format and deliver a speech to 900 people and it went really well.

In the end, I delivered my speech and the feedback I received was great. They enjoyed what I had to say and said how confident I came across. Which was exactly what I wanted. Really enjoyed Elliot and have no doubt he has changed the way I will now address speaking in public."

Kristy Bartlett – General Manager Ray White Victoria/Tasmania

I had one team member in particular who had come from a self-employed structure and was now being challenged to adapt to a much more accountable, results driven workplace.

The key with planners is that if they're not managing their time well they really are leaving money on the table. So better time management directly impacts revenue. Plus the regulation and compliance aspects of what we do are intense, so you have to be on top of it. Time really is money!

One of our team has a whole mix of processes. So the challenge was that he just was not getting it all done. He was drowning in different work. There were things that needed follow-up that had been going on for too long and his sales were starting to suffer as a result.

What Elliot did was put in place a series of simple processes, exercises and techniques. It didn't take a lot of time but it re-wired the way he uses his day. It changed the way he invested time in his staff to help him more often. It ended up in the change of staff with his assistant. But when the new assistant came in that new person was walking into a much tighter system that was able to help him get up to speed more quickly. They changed the way they structure their week. He is much more productive overall.

The results in terms of sales revenue, in terms of productivity, in terms of promptness, professionalism and being on top of different compliance issues - all very different from where he was when he started and that's a credit to how he has put things in place and got the result.

*Since then Elliot has worked with five other planners to apply the same principles and strategies - it has been really valuable for our business. **John Moran – Apt Wealth Partners***