Let’s find a way to
Make it Easy

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“The value of another’s experience is to give us hope, not to tell us how or whether to proceed.”

Peter Block
What gets in the way of effectively getting our work done?

A few things I noticed, ...and Why this talk?

My First Job
Watering Plants in a Nursery

Two Responsibilities

Responsibility One:
Water the plants. Not only keep the plants alive, but provide an environment where they can thrive.
Pay Attention.
Each week find something we can do better.
Take action.

Responsibility Two

Continuous Improvement in Tiny Steps

Focus

Tiny Improvements, over time, provide a compounding effect.
I’m going to share a few books I’ve read recently (the last 5 years)

The Disciplined Pursuit of Less
Atomic Habits
An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones
by James Clear

1% per day for a year results in 37.78 times what you started with!!!

The compounded result of 1% Payout over time!

Using Excel to chart this

James Clear – Atomic Habits
Have a Tiny Improvements Habit

Build Habits!

Just do it!

Build Habits!

Exercise: What makes things difficult?
A Sticky Note Exercise...

What gets in the way of getting our work done effectively?

A short list of things that can destroy effectiveness:

- Fatigue
- Hunger
- Personality conflicts
- Missing requirements
- Insufficient resources
- Long-winded meetings
- Disagreements
- Poor working conditions
- Too Much Noise
- Too Quiet
- Context Switching
- Workflow interruptions
- Onboarding
- Negativity
- Not taking enough time
- Communication barriers
- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of skills
- Waiting for clarification
- Fear
- Lack of plan
- Upsetting work environment
- Lack of context/understanding
- Indecision
- Doubt
- Distractions
- Analysis paralysis
- Bugs
- Snow days
- Everyone is not on the same page
- Not knowing something
- External dependencies
- Unclear requirements
- Unclear expectations
- Unrealistic expectations
- Time zone differences
- Waiting on other teams
- Lack of work backing
- Interacting with others
- Dependency on other teams
- Waiting on dependency
- Technical blockers
- Scarce materials
- Not knowing how to do something
What have we learned?
Are there any repeat problems at your table?
Let’s share them.

What have we learned?
Why so pervasive?
Why so many?
Why so persistent?

Symptoms or Problems?

Symptoms vs Problems, And beyond
Wrong Focus

The Cycle of Continuous No-Improvement

First Lessons Learned (8th week)
1. Our estimates were off. We need to get better at estimating.
2. The requirements weren’t clear when we started. We need to get better at understanding requirements.
3. The requirements kept changing. We need to control the changes.

The Misplaced focus of Management

Let’s make it easy to manage things.
A quote from Mark Graban

"Hey everyone, we need to cut costs!
doesn’t work…"

Instead try
“Let’s make our work easier!”
Lower cost is one end result!

Things are hard to manage because...
we are trying to manage the wrong things.
Systems

Systems within Systems
And the Nature of systems

“A system is a network of interdependent components that work together to try to accomplish the aim of the system.”
~Deming
An automobile.
Has a way to move.
Has a way to steer.
Has a way to stop.

The Nature of Systems

The Work Itself
The System of Work (Defined or undefined)
The System of Management
The System of Business
The System of Purpose

JohnGall
The Systems Bible
John Gall
The Systems Bible

A working complex system has invariably evolved from a working simple system.

My Take on John Gall
The Systems Bible

The main feature of a working complex system is that it has become good at perpetuating itself.

Things are hard to manage
Because...

The system is good at perpetuating itself.

Things are hard to manage
Because...

The system is overwhelmingly resistant to change
Donella Meadows

Thinking in Systems

The idea of making a complex system do just what we want it to do can be achieved only temporarily, at best.
Donella Meadows

Things are hard to manage
Because...
You cannot make a system do what you want it to do.

Serendipity
Kahneman

Thinking Fast and Slow

Success = talent + luck

Kahneman

Great Success = a little more talent + a lot of luck

Things are hard to manage

Because...

Success is more about randomness and serendipity than anything else.
Beliefs and Biases

Practical Stuff

Any improvement is good
At the very least we’ll learn something (if we are paying attention)

Practice making improvements.

...and the cow said, Moo!

Illustration © 2013 - Andrea Zull

What gets in the way of effectively getting our work done?
We noticed many problems simply faded away when we turned up the good on working well together!

1% Per day for a year results in 37.78 times what you started with!!!

How much would you be willing to invest???

Nobody Ever Gets Credit for Fixing Problems that Never Happened: Creating and Sustaining Process Improvement

Nelson P. Repenning
John D. Sterman
Working harder, or smarter?

The lower our capability, the harder and more we have to work to be able to accomplish whatever it is we need to do.

The more we can increase our capability, the more we will get done for the amount of time we apply to the work.

Turn Up The Good

Rather than “solving problems” let’s find a way to have those problems fade away.
The Right Thing

The One Thing
The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results
by Gary Keller, Jay Papasan

I’m going to share a few books I’ve read recently (the last 5 years)

The One Thing
What’s the ONE Thing I can do, such that by doing it, everything else will be easier or unnecessary?

Easy or Unnecessary!
What might be the result of having a focus of this sort?
A proposal of where management might better focused

What if... we could provide an environment where everyone can do the best they can possibly do?

The best they can possibly do?

What if... we could make it as easy as possible for everyone to do the best they can possibly do?
As easy as possible!

A lofty goal

What if we base our company on making it as easy as possible for everyone to excel at whatever they want to excel at?

Extreme Self-Organizing, Self-Managing people and teams... and organizations
Serendipity (Revised)

Enhancing serendipity

Serendipitous Environment

Serendipitous Practices

Serendipitous Preparedness

Stumbling in the right direction.

- The trick is knowing the right direction.
- Unfortunately, I don’t think we can.
- But we can steer.
- Let’s Learn to steer.

The Power of Pull:
How Small Moves, Smartly Made, Can Set Big Things in Motion
by John Seely Brown (Author), Lang Davison (Author), Hagel Ill, John (Author)
Stumbling Purposefully and Purposeful Stumbling

I take small steps, and react to what I learn from each step. My direction may change based on what I learn.

Purposeful Stumbling

I often choose my next step based on its potential for exposing things, perturbing the system, its learning possibilities, and for opening doors.

Connect with the right people

Ainsley Nies
A great Agile Coach
Me
Pay Attention
Learn to See
Sense and Respond

There is no magic.
It's all magic.

The object isn’t to make art,
it’s to be in that wonderful state
which makes art inevitable

Let’s find a way to
Make it Easy

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