

“‘Synergy’ means the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. These two authors have produced a superior, synergistic product on a subject of immense importance.”

—Stephen R. Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

FAKE

“WORK”

Why People Are Working Harder
Than Ever but Accomplishing Less,
and How to Fix the Problem

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(xv)

Foreword by STEPHEN R. COVEY

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THIS IS AN amazing book. And so needed today!

Just consider this story: You're flying to a business meeting in Chicago. You land on time, go to the car rental place, and rent a car. The person at the desk gives you a map. You find your rental car in the lot and drive off, happily on your way. The problem is, the person at the desk made a mistake and handed you a map of Philadelphia. That was the only source of information that you had. You're totally lost and utterly confused, so you call your business associate, who is waiting for you at the meeting, and tell him that you can hardly find your way out of the airport. He glibly tells you to try harder, so you double your speed, but now you're getting increasingly lost twice as fast. You call your associate again in a state of utter discouragement, complaining that you can find no landmark that resembles anything on the map. He senses your negative energy and tells you to think positively. He even gives one of his favorite little speeches about the importance of PMA – Positive Mental Attitude – and sings a few lines of “Your altitude is governed by your attitude” to you. So you start thinking positively and now you don't care that you're lost. You're happy and contented in your lost state. You never really wanted to attend the meeting, anyway.

But the problem had nothing to do with your behavior or with your attitude. It had everything to do with a bad map.

That's what this book is about. It gives us the right map about work. Now of course, if you have the correct map, then behavior and attitude become important. But until you have a correct map, to change your behavior or to shape up your attitude would be worthless. In almost every field of endeavor, significant break-

throughs are break *withs*: breaks with old ways of thinking, old mental models, in short - bad maps.

Take a moment and consider the following question: What is more central to life than work? Work is the major activity that occupies most of our time every day. Therefore, it is supremely important to get a correct map, or a correct view, of what real work is.

That's why this book is so valuable, particularly today, when we have moved from the Industrial Age into the Knowledge Worker Age. In the Industrial Age, over 80 percent of the value added to goods and services came from machinery and manual labor, and there was a greater alignment and connection between this kind of work and producing desired results. But in the Knowledge Worker Age, 70 to 80 percent of the value added to goods and services comes from knowledge work—that is, human input, where the connection between such work and desired results has become blurred. In this global, digitized economy, competition is ten times what it was before, and the necessity to avoid fake work and do real work will make all the difference, producing success or failure.

Another reason it's so important to get a correct map of work is that organizations are currently under tremendous pressure to produce more for less, and yet employees are, for the most part, disempowered or even disallowed from using their capabilities, their intelligence, their talents, and their passion. What a dilemma—pressure to produce more for less yet prevented from using talent! Fake work is deeply demoralizing and disempowering and contributes to the metastasizing emotional cancers of interpersonal conflict, interdepartmental rivalries, hidden agendas, complaining, criticizing, angry contention, and profound cynicism. And people often feel that they're being victimized by the system or a bad boss or some other corporate bad guy.

Employees today are caught in the activity trap—they're busy to the hilt but profoundly misaligned with well-thought-through strategies and desired results. In fact, in most cases, even if the strategies are well thought through, they're not understood down the line. Or if the strategies are understood, most people don't

know how their role connects to those strategic goals. Then the whole world of work revolves around execution gaps. The activity trap becomes institutionalized and enculturated, and eventually many come to assume that this is simply the way things are—they start to accept that most reports are never even looked at, most meetings don't need to be held, and little by little they become codependent and complicit in maintaining this terribly costly fake reality. Then more and more people complain, criticize, and blame, blame, blame. (This is sometimes called a self fulfilling prophecy, where you produce the evidence to support your perception.)

I encourage you to seriously study this book; it is so beautifully, sequentially organized into two parts: Part 1, Understanding Fake Work and Its Causes; and Part 2, The Pathways out of Fake Work, and the stories wonderfully represent and illustrate each of the points made in this sequence. If you allow the sequence to have its way with you, as I did, you will have a growing conviction of the difference between fake work and real work. You will also feel excited and energized about fixing the problem.

This fixing process is immensely practical and hands-on, but also fundamentally principle-based, so that you can adapt these principles to most every situation. I've had years of involvement in both doing fake work and researching fake work, and I've learned from personal experience the sense of satisfaction and fulfillment that comes from doing real work that is aligned with carefully thought through strategic results. The combination of the paradigm of fake and real work and the stories in this book will give you the confidence to resolve and deal with the execution gaps that are so pervasive in most organizations.

Synergy means the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. These two authors have produced a superior, synergistic product on a subject of immense importance. Gaylan Nielson was a senior leader at FranklinCovey at a period when I traveled extensively, so I don't know him well, but I know of his accomplishments and his work with our consulting group—helping us forge new services and building long-term relationships with our clients with a whole new perspective. That new perspective manifests itself as a fresh

angle, a unique, creative contribution to this book and to his work with Brent Peterson in building several companies that have grown into The Work Itself Group. I have known Brent Peterson for many years and believe him to be one of the finest educators I have ever known. The textbooks he has written have been brilliant and well accepted. We have worked together as professors at a university and then as consultants, trainers, researchers, and writers in a marvelous training company. He has served as a real work leader, CEO, entrepreneur, and business owner and developer for many years. There is true synergy in this wonderful book, which I commend to you as being foundational in helping organizations to align and to execute on that which they have strategically decided to be worthy to focus on. This book should be read by leaders, by managers, by trainers and by workers.

I wish you all the best in your study of this new mindset, and acquisition of the new tool set and skill set that enables the movement from the activity trap to both institutionalizing and enculturating real work.