

How to Get More Done By Kathy Kolbe

We all know the consequences of spitting into the wind.

Yet, that's what we do every time we act against our instincts.

And that's why so many are so miserable in their jobs and so frustrated they can't get more done.

"I'm not talking about the intelligence to do the job. Or the training. Or the personality. I'm talking about how you'll do the job - the predictable, determined internal force that governs how you act. It's like being in the right sport, but the wrong event. You'd never expect a sprinter to run a long distance race, just as you know a long-distance runner doesn't have enough steam to excel as a sprinter. How can we so clearly see the benefit of "playing your own game" on the sports field, when we can't see the same thing is needed in business? It's about time we try.

Human instinct is the power behind our actions; it's the source of our mental energy. If you go with the force of your instinct, you get more done. If you fight it - or work against it - you experience everything from stress that has become the most common workplace malady to outright failure.

The first problem is we haven't known about our instincts. Nobody teaches us about natural instincts in school; you won't find a single question about them on any college test; personnel directors never ask about them in the crucial face-to-face interview; they aren't listed under job requirements. In fact, science tries to tell us humans don't even have instincts - that only lowly animals do. They're simply wrong.

Nothing else - nothing - will have more bearing on your success or your ability to get things done. Most of us operate in a business environment that overthinks and underdoes. Workers are sent to "feel good" seminars to get motivated; personnel departments issue edicts on how things have to be done; many employers demand conformity to a particular method and reject people they fear will act differently. And all this happens without an iota of proof that a job can be accomplished only one way. The results are totally predictable. Employees are unhappy. They're frustrated. They're angry. They're missing work. They're procrastinating. They're heading for burn out. And they're ticking off their employers. It neither has to be that way nor should be that way. But it will only change when people start recognizing their instincts - and trusting their guts. That's what separates the high-achievers who have no trouble getting things done from everyone who is struggling. It's not that high achievers have more energy; they just know the power of working with their instinctive grain, instead of against it. I've seen it consistently in working with hundreds of thousands of people from around the world -from small companies to multi-national corporations. And if it sounds like common sense - as simple as understanding the consequences of spitting in the wind - it is.

After more than 20 years of research, I've identified four "Striving Instincts" that govern human behavior.

- The probing instinct creates a need to investigate in depth. I call this the "Fact-Finder" instinct.
- The patterning instinct causes us to seek a sense of order or structure. I call this "Follow Thru."
- The innovating instinct is the force behind experimentation. I call this "Quick Start."
- The demonstrating instinct converts ideas into tangible form. I call this "Implementor."

We have talents in all four striving instincts. Sometimes we insist on acting in one of the instinctive modes; sometimes we're comfortable accommodating actions in that style; and sometimes we resist acting that way. I've found that resistance can be just as powerful as insistence. A person resistant in Quick Start can't stand chaos and wards off change, just as strongly as a person insistent in Quick Start thrives on balancing ten balls at one time and changing course without concern. I've found a person resistant in Implementor will never build a model or accomplish a task with a hands-on approach, just as predictably as a person insistent in Implementor demands a tactile approach. A person resistant in Fact Finder won't research, while one insistent in Fact Finder can't research enough. A person resistant in Follow Thru will get ill at the thought of keeping charts and graphs, while one insistent in Follow Thru will blossom in that task.

The instrument I've developed measures your instinctive makeup - your MO, or modus operandi, a "mental fingerprint." Once you figure out your mental fingerprint, you've got a roadmap to getting further, faster.

I once worked with a man who owned a fishing fleet. He wasn't happy with a crew member who didn't carry his load when it came to setting and repairing nets or making the best use of storage space - all knacks of an Implementor. "He was a klutz, but a nice guy," the owner remarked, "and I knew he had a family to support, so I encouraged him when he came to me with a proposal. Although he wasn't a good boatman or fisherman, the guy had a knack for cutting deals with the local markets. He had some pretty weird ideas for selling what we caught before we'd caught it and running up a tab with customers. We only tried about half his ideas, enough so we doubled profits over the season. Now he's my director of marketing. And he's still a lousy fisherman." That true story helps demonstrate how we can use our instinctive talents to do the job the way we want. Rather than getting stuck in a dead-end role that doesn't let you prove what you can do, use your creative ability to convert it into a chance for success.

Try telling your boss you'd like to experiment with a new method - one that fits your MO - on a fairly minor, low-profit job. Chances are that when she sees the quality of the work you've done, she'll be more willing to let you use your method for more important projects. Say you're a member of a team - can you barter your talents with others, trading what you do well with what they will do for you? Or volunteer for additional assignments that are better suited to your instinctive makeup? Tailoring your methods to your MO will ultimately satisfy everyone. More work will get done and the quality will be higher.

The trick is this: whenever possible, let your boss see the results, not the process. If you're a sprinter, show off on the short track. If you're a long-distance runner, take your long strides at that finish line. But whatever you do, stop spitting into the wind.