

MAKE WORK **FUN**

SO PEOPLE DON'T *QUIT*

analyze. improve. move.

how to hit your target in business and life

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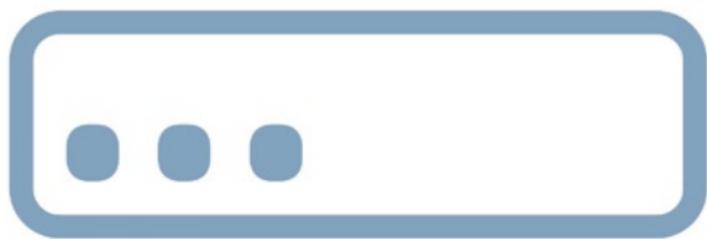
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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Sometimes we just need a little nudge to move toward action. The purpose of this book is to give you measured steps toward taking that action.

Throughout the book, I will walk through a professional and a personal example of how to **AIM: Analyze, Improve, Move.**

First things first, we will first determine your **target.** You cannot hit that which you cannot name.

Next, we will figure out how to cut down all the noise and keep the main thing the main thing. What is getting in the way of you spearing your

target?

Now that the target is clear and the obstacles are identified, we will **analyze** your current systems that are either helping or hindering your goals. What am I doing well, and what needs improvement?

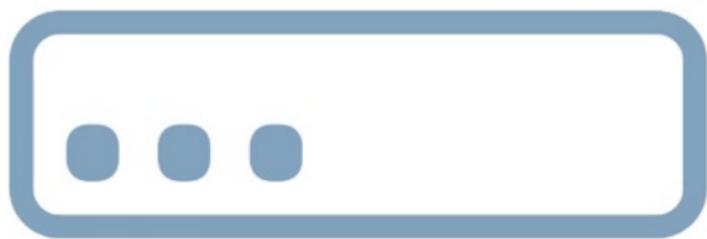
Improvement takes time, energy, and effort, but we will work through how you can **improve** all human interactions to hit that target with precision and consistency.

The most important step in this process is to **MOVE!** We will work to overcome the knowing/doing gap through an actionable plan.

Finally, we will figure out how to make this process a habit in your world.

The goal here is that you learn how to make work fun so people don't quit! People quit things that aren't fun.

Let's do this.



analyze. improve. move.

HOW TO KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING

DEFINING YOUR TARGET

How do you keep the main thing the main thing?

The reality is if we don't have a target, we will most definitely not hit what we intend to hit. We often aim at a wall and hope for the best without focus or direction. We will indeed hit the wall, but will totally miss the spot with the most impact. That said, how much more focused can you be if you know your target?

In business or personally, what's your main thing?

What is your target?

You can only have one priority at a time, so what is it?



Once you figure out what your main thing is, you can cut out the noise. How you work now likely has you chasing your tail, but that doesn't have to be the case. What if you clearly labeled your target and then had it visible in your office, on your computer, on your bathroom mirror, or somewhere the target reminds you daily to get it done? That simple action could change everything about how you do business.

What we tend to do is get distracted by all of the little things that steal our time. Instead, stay focused on what's right and good and get you closer to that target.

Here is a quick exercise to help you keep the main thing the main thing. Ask yourself the following questions:

What is THE priority?

Why is this THE priority?

What is getting in the way of THE priority?

Here are some of examples of what it looks like to walk through the process.

Professional Example

My employees are not being kind to one another. They are not relying on each other and are instead stabbing one another in the back

and making everyday tasks more difficult. I want them to rely on one another for support and work as a team. The backbiting and bickering are lowering productivity and causing bottlenecks in our systems.

1. What is THE Priority?

To narrow down your priority, there are a few factors to look at. I don't mean to minimize the effort needed to determine your priority. It requires you investigate everything you're doing to determine what is needed versus nice.

Narrowing yourself to one priority often requires a team effort with multiple iterations, and yet all the additional input and effort usually leads you to the same place you thought you needed to go in the first place.

Trust your gut. If you get through these three questions and don't feel solid about where you

landed, return to question one and work through it again. When you land on the right priority, you will know it. Your brain and your gut are closely connected. Trust those feelings.

For the purposes of the example above, the priority is...

“Build a cohesive team.”

2. Why is this THE priority?

If the team is cohesive, they will hold one another in high enough regard to be respectful and inter-reliant. They will recognize one another’s talents and use those talents to build a better product. The return on investment will increase because of the brilliance utilized throughout the entire team and not just by one or two people.

3. What is getting in the way of THE priority?

Pride, distrust, misalignment, fear, lack of understanding, stress, hierarchy.

Simply put, the culture is what is getting in the way of the priority. And yet, culture is what you allow.

What sorts of behaviors and habits have been allowed in the past?

Which of those behaviors are acceptable, and which ones need to stop?

Personal Example

I want to lose weight. I want to like the way I look in my clothes. I want to eat right. I want to be healthy. I am uncomfortable all the time, and I fall asleep when I shouldn't and can't sleep when I should. I hate the way I look. I am unhappy.

1. What is THE priority?

In this instance, the person struggles with various outcomes, but they stem back to one clear statement. If a person is the “best physical version of herself,” the other symptoms will begin to take care of themselves.

For the purposes of this example, the priority is...

“Be the best physical version of myself.”

2. Why is this THE priority?

All my frustrations stem back to the fact that I am not the best physical version of myself right now. I am not taking care of myself, which is leading to a myriad of other issues.

Giving a name to the problem is the first step toward finding a solution. Name it first. Then start

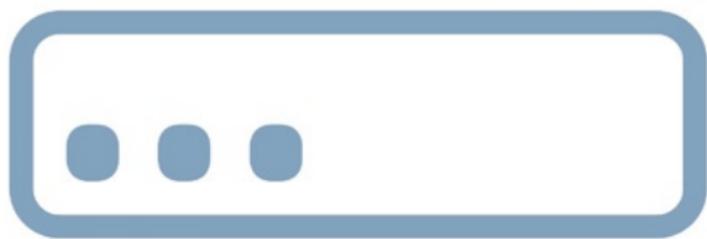
to consider what needs to change for it to look different in the future.

3. What is getting in the way of THE priority?

Self-sabotage, comfort, habits, environment, time, negative self-talk, fear, lack of motivation.

We have now identified a professional and personal priority. These are examples. You need to have your own version. Maybe hearing these examples will help you better determine your main things. Let's make the target clear. You will then know where to AIM.

Now it is time to **AIM** at that target.

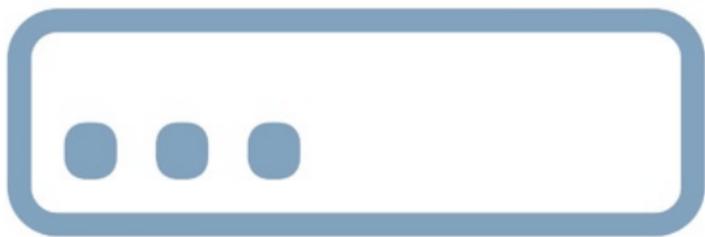


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ANALYZE IMPROVE MOVE

To be clear, identifying the target does not magically help you hit that target, it just gives you a clearer vision of how to take AIM.

The knowing-doing gap is a very real thing. Step one is to know what you want to do, but step two is actually doing it. We will focus on the doing in the coming chapters.



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ANALYZE

What are you doing that works?
And doesn't?
What does it mean to analyze?

You have identified your target, but now you must analyze your existing systems to determine their ability to help you hit your target.

James Clear, in *Atomic Habits*, says, “you don’t rise to the level of your expectations, you fall to the level of your systems.”

Let’s analyze the systems.

What systems can be controlled? You can

analyze your systems for onboarding new employees or analyze systems for getting your kids ready in the morning, but you must analyze your systems.

Everything becomes a little clearer with a relevant story. Here is one to help guide your thinking.

Storytime ... I had the opportunity to work with a group of nurses who were struggling to get along with one another. This group had worked together for years and just came off the pandemic, which was really difficult for everyone.

I was brought in to help them get along better and recognize each other's talents. Not a simple job by any stretch.

In talking with their administrator, the target we were trying to hit was to get them to **rely on one another** to get better results for the patients and

the home as a whole.

The first thing I did was give them all a personality test. The thought behind doing this was to help them know more about what made each person react the way they did. I used the Enneagram with this group. Many different personality tests are available, and they all would get you to a similar determination. Later in this tiny book, we'll discuss neuro-signatures, which will likely become your new favorite team analysis tool.

The first thing we discovered was that there were a large number of perfectionists and an equally large number of commanders in this group. For those of you in the know, Enneagram 1's and 8's.

The **perfectionists** (1s) were afraid to make mistakes or look stupid, so they often would not ask for help.

The **commanders** (8s) were sure they had the right way to do most things and never wanted to appear stupid.

The combination created a workspace where no one asked for help. Diagnosing the problem was step one towards solving it.

As part of my diagnosis and treatment of the team, I brought the group to an escape room. The beginning of this escape room had everyone in handcuffs. Mission number one was to get out of the handcuffs so they could maneuver the room successfully without restraint.

The guy running the room told this group they could ask for help after 15 minutes. Forty-five minutes later, everyone was still wearing handcuffs, and they STILL had not asked for help. Finally, the guy running the escape room slid a clue under the door to help them. He said he never had a group go that long without asking

for help!

Remember, their personalities indicated they did not want to appear stupid, and they already had all the answers.

They miraculously made it out of the escape room with about 12 seconds to spare, but it was far from a team effort. One person pushed really hard and got it done...alone. After this experience, I sat with the team and discussed what they noticed.

Here is what we learned.

1. No one wanted to be the first to ask for help.
2. In their eyes, asking for help showed weakness.
3. They thought they could get the job done alone but had not considered how difficult it was.

Why do we as human beings think we have to have all the answers ourselves?

More on my nurse friends in the coming chapters.

Personally or professionally, we must rely on others if we want the best possible result we can attain. It is possible to get things done alone, but the results are never as good as they are when synergy prevails.

When you analyze how you're doing things, you must be honest with both the results you want and the results you're currently getting.

Some things are going okay but could be better. Some things are not going well at all.

You have some things, however, that are going really well! It is time to use those bright spots to improve the areas that are not going as well.

Professional Example

Target: Build a cohesive team

You have to know where you are to get to where you want to go. Here are some questions to help you analyze...

- What are your current systems for onboarding new employees?
- Do your employees feel equipped to do their jobs well?
- Do you know if your employees feel valued?
- Do your employees trust one another?
- What have you done to build trust?
- Do you intentionally value your employees?
- What do you do to celebrate quick wins?

If you don't know for sure if you are doing all these things...what should you do?

Personal Example

Target: Be the best physical version of myself.

Here are some questions to help you analyze...

- Which aspects of my physical well-being need attention?
- Do I have the resources necessary to make healthy food choices?
- Do I have an accountability partner to help me on this journey?
- Who might be able to help me on this journey?
- What has and has not worked for me in the past?

The two examples I gave above are specific, but the concept is pretty general.

Now it is your turn to analyze.

What goal am I trying to reach?



Why do the current practices need to change?

What will it look like if this situation is improved?

How will accomplishing this goal help support the organization's vision?

A gap analysis is one of the easiest ways to analyze your current systems. A gap analysis is a simple tool that allows you to consider things currently, how you want them to be, and what you need to bridge the gap between them.

In a gap analysis, you begin with the end in mind. (Thanks Covey) Start with the desired reality column (far right) and enter your ideal. Then move to the current reality (far left) and be brutally honest. We will fill in the “gap” in the improve and move sections with some actions you must take to move from left to right.

GAP ANALYSIS

Professional Example

Step 1

Current Reality	Actions Need	Desired Reality (Start here)
		Have a cohesive team that is inter-reliant and built on trust

Step 2

Current Reality	Actions Needed	Desired Reality (Start here)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Team does not work together at all• Distrust among teammates• Silos• Lack of cohesiveness		Have a cohesive team that is inter-reliant and built on trust

Personal Example

Step 1

Current Reality	Actions Need	Desired Reality (Start here)
		Be the best physical version of myself

Step 2

Current Reality	Actions Need	Desired Reality (Start here)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15 pounds overweight• Not sleeping enough• Eating really late at night• I love ice cream and chicken wings (not together)• I don't exercise enough		Be the best physical version of myself

Now that you have identified your current reality and your desired reality, let's *improve* so we can bridge the gap.

IMPROVE

**Now that I know better,
how do I do better?
Why should I improve?**

Once you have analyzed, you must improve. Improvement can come in many forms. One of the most important things you can do is improve your interactions with others.

I was born to teach. I thought I knew what that meant. I thought I would be in a high school classroom changing students' lives forever, but

that didn't happen. And yet, I was born to teach. My career took an interesting turn I could never have predicted, and I am forever grateful it did.

In 2006, I was asked to shift from teaching students to teaching teachers. (yes, that is a thing) It became my job to improve what was happening in the classrooms throughout my district, and I found it to be exactly what I was made to do. Since 2006, I have been teaching adults in one capacity or another, and I love it. In addition to teachers, I teach real estate agents, health care workers, actuaries, sales teams, newlywed couples, and anyone else who will listen.

I have learned a few things over those years which apply anytime you want people to remember what you said. I am so sure these things work in every situation I wrote a book about it. *Learning Can Stick: A Guide to Make*

Every Experience Safe, Logical, Fun, and Memorable.

Whether you are talking to your 16-year-old son about getting a car, your boss about getting a raise, or a team of people about new software, this formula will help. Trust me, I'm a teacher!

Regardless of the type of interaction, you must make it...safe, logical, fun, and memorable.

Safe is first for a reason. Safe does not just mean OSHA safe. It means psychologically safe. You lose trust if you do not make an interaction safe, especially at work. Without trust, you can't accomplish much of anything.

You need to see people as people first and foremost. Learn about them. Ask questions. Show genuine interest in who they are and what makes them tick.

Here are a few simple examples of ways to make you and your team feel safe.

SAFE

- Learn names and use them.
- Let people know it is okay to ask questions.
- Be clear with expectations.
- Create space for people to make mistakes.
- Build relationships with and among staff members.
- Be accessible.
- Give grace.
- Demonstrate transparency.



I could spend hours talking about how to make interactions with others safe. It really is the foundation for everything you need to do with humans.

The bottom line is people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

What do you currently do to make people feel safe when they interact with you?

What should you add to your toolbelt based on what you read?



Logical means...Have a plan...stick to the plan... share the plan...You shouldn't be the only person who knows the plan.

I have worked with many people who did not apply logic to their daily tasks. These were not illogical people, but they acted in illogical ways.

My favorite example of not being logical is...

Boss: “I need you in my office in one hour.”

Employee: Sixty full minutes of total panic trying to figure out why in the heck the boss needs to see them.

Logical would be...

Boss: “I need you in my office in an hour to brief me on the Smith file. I have a meeting with the Smiths at 5:00, and I need to know as much as you can tell me.”

Employee: Sixty full minutes to prepare to brief the boss on something specific. No panic is needed...except to get the report right, which is a focused and productive panic instead of random useless panic.

Logical also means you are thoughtfully approaching the task at hand. If you are conducting a meeting, you have an agenda that you will actually use, AND you gave it to people ahead of time. If you write a training, you will have objectives and make those objectives known to others.

**Logical requires planning but
yields excellent results.**

Here are a few simple ways to make others' experiences logical...

LOGICAL

- Be clear with all expectations.
- Create quality over quantity of information.
- Take breaks.
- Give multiple ways to gain information.
- Feed the participants.
- Reflect.
- Utilize one-page summaries.
- Let people process the information.
- Create predictability.



Logical doesn't mean complicated. It means structured and thoughtful.

What do you currently do to make people experience logical execution of information when they interact with you?

What should you add to your toolbelt based on what you read?

Fun is much bigger than happy hours and telling jokes in Zoom meetings. I am an Enneagram 7, since I gave you examples from that test in earlier chapters. An Enneagram 7 is an enthusiastic optimist, and we are all about the fun.

Fun does not mean the same thing for everyone, however. And yet, fun is necessary.

If you don't make work fun, people will quit. People quit things that aren't fun.

You don't go on a second date if the first date was awful. You don't watch an entire series on Netflix if the first couple of episodes aren't fun. Why do we expect employees to keep coming back to a non-fun workplace?

Sometimes people forget it is okay to have fun at work...or maybe they never realized that was an option at all. But fun is what keeps people at work.

- Fun means people's talents are being utilized.
- Fun means people feel valued and appreciated.
- Fun means people are contributing to the greater good.
- Fun means people don't quit.
- Every meeting should have an element of fun. Every training should evoke emotion.

If the fun isn't there, the hard things will be even harder. Of course, there will be tough days, unpleasant tasks, and difficult decisions, but if you have established a "fun" work environment, those not-so-fun things can be tolerated.

Fun also looks different for everyone. For an extrovert, happy hours and team-building activities are super fun. But for an introvert, those activities are draining.

How might you make work more fun for all?

FUN

- Laugh.
- Make other people laugh.
- Do not laugh at other people, but instead with them.
- Give people stickers.
- Be okay with a little silly.
- Play music in the break room
- Give incentives for the little things
- Celebrate small wins
- Recognize people's talents
- Value your people.
- Ensure people feel they are contributing.



What do you do to create fun when people interact with you?

What should you add to your toolbelt based on what you read?

Memorable should be a no-brainer. No one wants to be forgettable. No one says things hoping no one will listen. We want people to remember what we say, and yet we forget to be memorable.

Memorable means you circle back with the person you are talking to after you are done. Memorable means you give people something to take with them. Memorable means what you say sticks.

I believe firmly in the sprinkle, splash, flood, drip, drip, drip model of sharing information. I learned this phrase in my fourth year of teaching and have repeated it for the last twenty. It just makes sense. If you want people to retain information, this is how to make that happen.

The **sprinkle and splash** are like the preview of the movie. This happens before the meeting,

training, conversation, date, or interaction. This is simple but powerful and lets the person you are going to interact with know what is coming so they can start to get excited.

The **flood** is the meeting, training, conversation, date, or interaction. This is where all the information is shared, but just as it happens in a flood, most of the information/water is lost in runoff.

The **drip, drip, drip** is the most important part. This is the follow-up to the meeting, training, conversation, date, or interaction. This happens the next day, a week later, or a month after...this is where people are reminded of the “main thing.”

Here are a few ways to make interactions memorable.

MEMORABLE

- Revisit your main points
- Follow up
- Allow people to ask questions
- Never do a “one and done”

- Establish check-ins



- Circle back with consistency

- Build in safeguards

- Sprinkle splash flood drip drip drip

What do you currently do to make interactions memorable?



What should you add to your toolbelt based on what you read?

Now it is your turn to improve...

What steps will be taken to accomplish this goal? What practices do I need to stop, start, and continue? How will I make this happen? Who needs to be involved?

If you want to improve your systems, you must make sure the systems are safe, logical, fun, and memorable for all involved parties.

The improvement requires a change in behavior. It requires a shift in thinking. It requires a different way of work.

Storytime continued...

Analyzing the problem was step one with the nurses, but if we don't do anything to improve the situation, then all we've done is give it another name. The improvement for this group involved discussing why they react to one another the way they do and what might change that behavior.

We talked about simple things...

For the perfectionist, when someone handed them a file that wasn't stacked properly and was messy, they immediately felt triggered. They

were very frustrated and stopped listening to the person who handed them the stuff.

A simple fix. Just stack the papers neatly ahead of time.

This is a minor example, but it did have major implications for the people involved. They started having conversations about how they feel when someone says, “I don’t like that,” or “I don’t know,” or “I would’ve done it this way.”

Learn how to say things a little differently to better serve one another’s needs. Improvement comes from choosing to do a better job. Solid human interactions require a few simple things.

Interactions must be safe, logical, fun, and memorable.

Safe: In the case of these nurses, talking to each other in a way that wasn’t rude made it safe. They genuinely liked each other but weren’t

acting like it with their words. They wanted to get better, so they started thinking about how to say things and do things in a more positive way.

Logical: They stacked the papers neatly. They created a routine that allowed the commanders to share their ideas with others at the beginning of each day. They were logical.

Fun: They remembered that they liked each other. They started having themed days each month. They chose to laugh together. They had fun.

Memorable: The nurses also revisited their systems regularly. They didn't just talk about the new ways of work once. They checked in with one another and made sure everyone was following the new protocols. They made it memorable.

I am not pretending that this problem went away overnight, but they did now have a common language. They all understood one

another when talking about how they felt about certain things that happened on the floor. They made an effort to shift their behaviors.

It is time for Step Three of the gap analysis. The actions needed are your list of improvements you can and should make. You will see an example of some ways to improve on [page 32](#)

MOVE

**What actions should I take
to move forward?
Yikes, now I have to move!**

The knowing-doing gap is real. We often know what to do but don't take the time, energy, and effort required to actually do it. Today's the day we break that cycle.

- What action steps do you need to take to move towards hitting your target regularly?

- What support systems do you need to make that movement happen?
- How can you bridge the knowing/doing gap?

Did you know it takes 18 times to do something to master it, but most people tend to quit after the first or second attempt?

My challenge to you is to push past the failure and learn from it. If you want to move towards excellence, you must fail forward. Failure is just the first step toward learning.

And now it's time to move. Movement is the most difficult part of this process. Movement requires people to change how they've always done things. And although some people have less aversion to change than others, no one loves all aspects of change, but we do tend to love the results.

This type of change really requires humility, vulnerability, and honesty. It requires a space where people know it's okay to ask questions, to be vulnerable, and to try things that might fail the first time is necessary for this to work.

You must build a psychologically safe place. We talked about creating safety in the improve section, but it must also happen when you move.

When I say psychological safety, I mean asking for help is okay. Mistakes will be made when people are trying new things. And those mistakes are how people will learn.

Leaders must create this type of environment for their teams. It does not simply happen.

Storytime Wrap Up...

Let's revisit my nurse friends again. For my nurses, "move" meant having an administrator

who was not only willing to allow for mistakes but encouraged them. Now, I am not saying she encouraged mistakes with patients. Of course not. But she did encourage trying new ways to interact with one another on the floor. And when it didn't go according to plan, they were encouraged to try again.

She created space for questions to be asked and did this with support. She chose excellence for her people and gave them the tools needed to make the excellence a reality.

She also checked in with the nurses more regularly, individually and collectively. She used their input and feedback to determine which actions were working and which needed to be tweaked. She thoughtfully made staffing adjustments and policy adjustments to better serve the team's needs as well.

Move requires time. You can't just move once

and expect everything to shift. You must keep putting one foot in front of the other and moving towards the target. The target doesn't move, you do. It is up to you if you are going to move closer to the target or farther away.

Let's wrap up the two examples we have used throughout the book.

Remember those gap analysis charts we created. Let's look back at the actions needed and figure out how to bridge the knowing/doing gap.

Professional Example

Current Reality	Actions Need	Desired Reality (Start here)
<p>Team does not work together at all.</p> <p>Distrust among teammates.</p> <p>Silos.</p> <p>Lack of cohesiveness.</p>	<p>Create intentional time for the team to learn more about one another using personality tests.</p> <p>Re-evaluate the talents of team members to make sure everyone is aware of their own talents and the talents of others.</p> <p>Shift job duties to capitalize on talents.</p> <p>Carve out time to allow team members to learn from one another.</p>	<p>Have a cohesive team that is inter-reliant and built on trust</p>

Just knowing that he should shift job duties to capitalize on his talents does not mean he will adjust his actions. Adjustment takes time, repetition, and support.

One of my favorite words regarding “move” is grace. We must give grace to ourselves and to others when we are trying new things. We are not going to get it totally right the first time. It takes 18 times, remember? And even then, it won’t be perfect, just “mastered.”

Reread the list of actions needed and think about what support systems would need to exist for them to become actions instead of remaining ideas.

How often do you need to check in on these actions?

Who needs to be directly and indirectly involved in making these actions happen?

What accountability system exists or needs to exist to change beliefs that will change behaviors?

Personal Example

Current Reality	Actions Need	Desired Reality (Start here)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15 pounds overweight• Not sleeping enough• Eating really late at night• I love ice cream and chicken wings (not together)• I don't exercise enough	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a sleep plan that fits my crazy schedule but gives me consistency• No screens right before bed• Limit ice cream and chicken wings to one day a week.• Join a gym that provides accountability• Establish a feeding window that will support my lifestyle and stops my eating by 7 pm	Be the best physical version of myself

The same certainly applies to personal examples. Getting into good physical shape is hard. But so is being in bad physical shape. You have to choose your hard. Again, grace is needed, as is accountability.

Each one of these action steps needs to be revisited regularly to ensure the shift has been maintained.

This elephant is best eaten with friends.

RECAP

- What is your target?
- What do you need to analyze?
- What should you improve?
- How will you move?

NEURO-SIGNATURES HELP YOU AIM

We have taken AIM, and we are in line to hit our target, but every one of us needs something a little different to be able to actually hit that target.

We are all wired very uniquely, and that wiring is our superpower. It is up to us to recognize it and use it accordingly.

I am sure you have taken a personality test or seven in your lifetime. Whether you prefer the DISC, Myers-Briggs, Enneagram, or some combination thereof, knowing who you are and

what makes you tick is important.

I recently read a book called, The *Brain Friendly Workplace*, and it gave me a new perspective on personality tests. This book talks about neuro-signatures. These are the hormones that are released in our brains that make us who we are.

It is super fancy and complicated on the brain level, yet simple and easy to follow on the explanation level. I bet you will be able to pick yours pretty easily. Typically you have one main one and one close second. I have tied objects to the hormones to help you remember what's what.

Your neuroscience influences your reactions to every work and personal situation.

Your particular neuro-signature influences everything:

- your personality
- how you process stress
- how you like to work
- whether you are an extrovert, introvert, or ambivert
- the types of roles in which you thrive
- the tasks that bring you joy (or headaches)
- how and when you work best

To simplify this concept, here are common objects which relate to each neuro-signature. Most people are a combination of two (or more) signatures.

<p>Slinky: Dopamine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idea-Oriented • Fun • Visionary • Talkative • Thinks Big Picture 	<p>Magnifying Glass: Testosterone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail-Oriented • Asks Questions • Thinker • Observant • Thought-filled
<p>Teddy Bear: Estrogen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People-Oriented • Relational • Warm • Friendly • Thoughtful 	<p>Paper Clip: Serotonin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List-Oriented • Punctual • Keeps things/people together • Organized • Thinks Logically

I am a slinky with teddy bear tendencies. I am an idea person who thrives when I get to think outside the box. I love nothing more than to dream up an idea and then surround myself with amazing paper clips and magnifying glasses who can make that dream a reality. The teddy bear in me checks in with everyone and ensures they are all okay, especially when executing one of my crazy ideas.

Teams need to have all four types of neuro-

signatures represented. And yet 80% of all leaders are slinky/magnifying glasses. This neuro-signature type can be truly exhausting for paper clips and teddy bears. There must be a balance.

When hiring or building a team for a project, know your people. Find a balance of neuro-signatures so the project won't just get done but will get done amazingly well, using everyone's talents. This makes work fun!

In your “inner circle” (spouse/partner, friends, family members), which neuro-signatures appear most frequently? Which ones are missing? How might you find a better balance?

Do you display the same neuro-signature personally and professionally?
If you show up differently depending on the environment, how does that compromise your authenticity?



How might you use your new neuro-signature knowledge to help you AIM towards your target?

We already discussed creating a fun workplace is a lot bigger than happy hour and potluck lunches. Those things are important, but that's not the only way to have fun. Fun is more

about making sure that people feel valued and appreciated and that their talents are being utilized.

There are many ways to do this, but the most simplistic and useful one is to ask people what they enjoy. You can't please everybody, and that's okay, but you can find ways to let people feel as if they're contributing at work.

Often we think it's okay for people just to do what their job description says. The problem with that approach is everybody has talents, and those talents might not be part of that specific job description.

When you know your people well, you will learn their talents and can start utilizing them to better your team.

This actually provides a dopamine hit which triggers your brain that what you're doing is fun. We come back for more when that dopamine

has been released, so you are actually creating a positive feedback loop at work by doing this.

Let me give you an example, I do not get excited about formulas in Excel. I can do them, and I can work pivot tables and get the sheet to do what I need it to do, but it does not fill my cup.

I have a colleague, however, who legitimately gets excited when there is an Excel sheet to be tackled. She loves to spend time color coding and sorting and making the data pop. It needs to be part of her job to make us all effective spreadsheets that we can use to do our work more efficiently. That is a complete win-win, and yet it was not in any way a part of her job to do this.

Why not?

She deserves to be doing something she feels

good doing and enjoys. The entire team would benefit from that talent. Why wouldn't that be something that she contributes regularly?

Think about your team. Whether you are running that team or a contributing member.

- What are the teammates' strengths?
- How can you create opportunities for them to do more of those things?
- How might allowing a shift positively impact your entire team?
- Will that make work fun?

SO WHAT, NOW WHAT?

Even though this is just a tiny book, it is full of BIG ideas. These big ideas can transform your personal life or business endeavors, but only if you use the ideas to change your behavior.

Our beliefs drive our behaviors. If we believe something needs to change, look different, or be different, we will do everything in our power to make those shifts. But if we don't believe in our heart of hearts that things need to change, look different, or be different, the knowing/doing gap will be a chasm that cannot be crossed.

I cannot make you change anything, but I can help you see the value of a shift.

Here is a quick recap of all you learned so you can execute change as you see fit.

First, ask yourself

1. What is THE priority?
2. Why is this THE priority?
3. What is getting in the way of THE priority?

This will help you determine your target.

Next, analyze your existing systems

Use a gap analysis to determine where you are and where you want to be.

Improve your interactions by making them safe, logical, fun, and memorable.

Then, improve on those systems

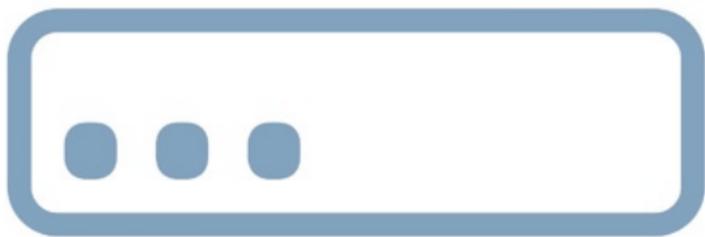
Bridge the gap by creating actions that will take you from where you are to where you want to be.

Determine who needs to help you get to where you want to be.

Now, move

1. Review the actions listed in your gap analysis and find ways to make them happen.
2. Revisit those actions often.
3. Continue trying no matter what.

The formula isn't magical, but the results can be if you choose to give it a shot.



analyze. improve. move.

MAKE WORK FUN, SO PEOPLE DON'T QUIT

Before shifting my career path to teaching adults, I was a high school science teacher. I loved molding and shaping the minds of teenagers. High school is such an interesting time in life. In case you were unaware, between the ages of 14 and 18, humans actually know everything there is to know. Since they already know everything, educating this age group is challenging.

Teenagers do not want or need to come to class because they, indeed, already know everything. This phenomenon stems back to a

fear of appearing stupid. The students want to show those around them they have it all under control, but they have little to no control.

Guess what, adults are not much different. We all fear looking stupid in front of our peers. We want to show our bosses, colleagues, friends, and neighbors how smart we are. We avoid doing things that are difficult and cautiously approach learning opportunities with trepidation.

As a facilitator, leader, teammate, or parent, you must break down those barriers if you want your participants to learn. You must create a space where vulnerability is safe and encouraged. It is your job to ease the minds of those in the room, replacing fear with safety. Although this sounds like a tall order, I have found an incredibly effective way to build trust quickly so that learning can stick.

Bear with me, I have to tell you a quick story.

One day, I was in my classroom, and I saw some stickers lying on my desk. I honestly have no idea what possessed me to pass them out, but I decided my seniors needed those stickers. I stood at the door of my portable (aka trailer because our school was overcrowded and I did not have a classroom in the building), stickers in hand, and proceeded to put a smiley face sticker on the hand of each student who walked into my room that afternoon.

The students' reactions to those stickers were remarkable. As I placed those stickers on their hands, they smiled, they giggled, they showed their stickers to their friends, and they thanked me.

Then, more miraculously, they sat down and were ready to learn. I remember that class feeling different. At the time, I did not understand why.

The next day, I had kind of forgotten about the stickers. The life of a high school teacher is a bit crazy, and I was simply not thinking about it. The first student came in and said, “Mrs. McMullen, where is my sticker?”

My response to the first student was simply, “That was just a fluke idea yesterday; it wasn’t meant to be a daily thing.” But then the next student came in and asked too. They started saying things like, “We really liked them.” “Can we get one every day?” “Please.”

High school students do not often say please unless it is important to them. I got out the stickers and started a pattern.

I told the students they had to show up on time to class to get a sticker. I taught in a portable in the very back of the school, so students being tardy to class was a real struggle.

I kid you not, I would have senior boys run from the cafeteria to my classroom for those stickers. I was dumbfounded. It was just a sticker. Or was it? It did not take me long to realize it had little to do with the sticker.

One time I was busy putting grades in during class change, so I had a student stand at the door to pass out stickers for me, and the kids almost revolted. They said, “She doesn’t give us stickers...YOU give us stickers.”

I discovered that day it was not about the sticker. It was about the physical and emotional interaction I had to have with each student to put that sticker on their hand.

That simple act of authentic interaction showed them I cared about them. I noticed them. I loved them enough to say something individual to each one of them. It made them feel special.

My career shifted not long after that, and I went from having a classroom of my own to traveling to 35 schools in our district. I interacted with students who were not “my kids,” and I saw them for only very short periods of time. I would guest teach or watch other teachers teach, and I had to build relationships in an instant.

I decided to try my stickers again. I probably interacted with 10,000 students during those six years, and only three students ever turned down my stickers.

During those same six years, I started teaching adults. On a whim, I decided to try using stickers with them too. I greeted them at the door before a training, asked them their names, and gave them a sticker.

I could not have predicted the reaction I got.

Men and women alike loved the stickers. They would laugh and say it took them back to their

childhood. After the initial sticker for showing up, to get stickers the participants had to share an idea, take a risk, or be a great learner. I have not ever seen people's hands shoot up to volunteer to answer questions like they do when there is a sticker involved. A silent room teems with excitement with a simple phrase like, "What do you think? The first three to respond get a chocolate-scented sticker."

Without prompting, it became a competition to see who could earn the most stickers during a training opportunity. Sometimes, I would even give prizes to the person with the most stickers at the end of our learning time together.

People eagerly dove into learning. They worked together to gain more stickers, and they tied emotion to their learning as they instantly got rewarded for their efforts.

I have now given stickers out across the nation to superintendents, principals, teachers, students, colleagues, healthcare professionals, real estate agents, recruiters, strangers, and friends. You are never too old for a sticker because you are never too old to be valued.

It wasn't then and never will be about the sticker. It was about being noticed, being celebrated, and being valued. The sticker was simply the vehicle that allowed me to break down barriers quickly and completely.

Ten years after I passed out my first sticker, one of my students from that class messaged me on Facebook. She said, "Mrs. McMullen, you will never guess what I found today. My sticker book."

She had kept every sticker I had ever given her in a little book, and 10 years later still had that book. She told me it made her feel loved. Don't we all need just a little more love?

Recently, I was teaching a master's level course in Educational Leadership. Of course, I gave out stickers because I really do not know how to function in a professional learning environment without them.

There were six people in the course, and five of them absolutely loved stickers. One student wore them on her face every time she got one; another started a collection on his notebook. One of the six, however, politely declined every time I offered her a sticker for something she had done well.

I have been doing this too long to be deterred by her lack of desire for a sticker. I just simply asked her who she would like to give her sticker to, even though she was the one who earned it. During our final class, we discussed the leadership lessons we had learned and discussed over the 10-week course.

We started talking about leverage and how to

get people to accept change even when it is hard. The stickers came up, and we discussed their purpose.

This woman, let's call her Tracy, was listening intently throughout the conversation. In the end, she took the floor. She said, "I know why I don't like the stickers." I was all ears, and we all leaned in to hear her answer. "I never received them as a child, so there are no fond memories of them. More importantly, it stressed me out to decide where I am supposed to put them."

"But," she added, "I think I see their value now. When trying to make people accept change, you must meet them where they are. The stickers are meant to create instant leverage resulting in a higher likelihood of accepting the change. If I am being honest, I tried it with my students, and they absolutely loved it."

Tracy brought stickers to her entire cohort and their new professor in term two of her master's program. She had a new understanding of the value of small gestures. She understood leverage.

Here's a little tip. Buy the smelly stickers. Everyone loves them the most. I have done years of research, trust me. They are a fan favorite.

Maybe you think a sticker is too cheesy or childish. That is totally okay. It is not natural for everyone to give stickers. It suits my personality. But remember, it is not about the sticker. It is about valuing people.

So, if not a sticker, then what?

How can you celebrate people in your world, professionally and personally?

What can you give them to help them open up to learning? Bragging rights can be motivation, but having something tangible can make all the difference.

Do you have swag for your organization?

Could people earn time off, money in the café, or a free coffee just for participating?

Could there be a raffle for prizes at the end of a training or long meeting?

It does not have to be expensive, but it does have to add value.

Learning can stick; whether it is a literal sticker or a figurative sticker, learning can stick. Be willing to be a bit unconventional, but only if it is authentic.

jot down your ideas

MORE INFORMATION?

Our time together doesn't have to stop here. This is just the beginning. This tiny book is a teaser of what I can do to support you and your employees so that people feel valued.

I'm available to speak to your organization, your specific team, or with you individually. Together we can work on your AIM so you will hit your target every single time.

Dr. Christie McMullen

PRODUCTIVE JOY

WITH
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AIM: Analyze, Improve, Move

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