

HOW BRAIN SCIENCE HELPS ENGAGEMENT

A White Paper Adapted from

Shift the Work

*The Revolutionary Science of Moving From
Apathetic to All In Using Your Head, Heart and Gut*

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Table of Contents

Timelessness Will Set You Free	3
Thinking fast vs. Thinking Slow	5
The Brain in the Head Sets Us on a Path	6
What Contemporary Brain Neuroscience Tells Us About Engagement	7
Our Brains in the Modern World	8
See the Head Brain Free	9
The Dopamine Economy	10
How We Use Our Brains at Work	11
Strategies for Engagement – Choose Your Reality, a Better You.	12
Strategies at the Workplace: Conscious Effort	14
Rich People Have Money, Wealthy People Have Time	16
Strategies in the Community	17
Routines, Rituals and Rhythm	17
Is This Enough?	18
About the Author	19
About the Book	21

Timelessness Will Set You Free

Your ideals aren't worth a damn until you have a concrete action plan.

In this white paper, adapted from my book *Shift the Work*, I look at how I approached success and engagement – and how I and, by extension, you, can learn to use your brains to become more engaged.

The brain in my head made my book *Grow Regardless* a bestseller.

I was intent on writing a book. Here were the problems: I'd never written one, I didn't have a platform, and more than fifty agents and publishers told me they weren't interested in my proposal.

Yet I was able to overcome these obstacles, out-innovate the industry, and get my first book, *Grow Regardless*, on the New York Times best-seller list.

Writing the book—believe it or not—was the simplest part. It took only ninety days (the book on which this white paper is based, on the other hand, took me eighteen months).

Then came the hard part. For the next year, our team studied how to successfully launch a book with no industry backing.

Step one was to learn about the world of books. Weeks into our investigation, we uncovered a harsh reality: if a book doesn't reach best-seller status straight out of the gate, chances are it will die on the vine.

Next, we discovered more depressing facts. Annually, more than 300,000 books are published through traditional channels. Adding self-published books, the number of new titles each year approaches a million, which comes out to around 83,000 books a month. Meanwhile, sales are stagnant. The average nonfiction book in the United States will sell fewer than two thousand copies in its lifetime. If only 20 percent of people who buy the book end up reading it, an author is lucky to find four hundred readers—a tough realization considering how I invested blood, sweat, and tears into writing the book.

It didn't take long for the team to stumble on a glimmer of hope.

The industry, we soon discovered, grades on a curve. You see, a book doesn't need to sell a ton of books to make best-seller lists. It only needs to outsell the other books on the market at the time. Normally, this is still a herculean challenge, since major publishers can spend up to several hundred thousand dollars promoting their books, doing everything possible to gain maximum exposure, like booking the authors on morning talk shows and buying ad space in major publications.

Knowing we couldn't compete with the major publishing houses, we put our head brains together and designed an innovative approach. We aimed for minimal exposure. This would become our advantage. In selecting a release date, we chose the shortest month of the year, in the worst week of the worst quarter for book sales. We released *Grow Regardless* the morning after the Super Bowl.

In selecting the coldest month of the year, in terms of books sales and weather, we'd avoid competing against the year's hottest books. Instead, we'd make the best-seller lists by standing out and outselling the weakest books on the market. The lists would then become our validation and greatest marketing tool.

Before the release date, we executed a strategic presales campaign, getting the book into the hands of people who mattered. A little luck also never hurt anyone. At a moment when the federal government was passing the unorthodox sequestration, the subtitle of our book, *Of Your Business' Size, Your Industry or the Economy...and Despite the Government!* surely tickled people's imaginations. The stars aligned, and we hit all of our goals within the first month. Then, we hit every major best-seller list.

Writing this book was not about making money (proceeds were donated to charity). Our aim in writing the book was to get one hundred thousand people back to work. It was a David-versus-Goliath story about how some of my greatest life and business mistakes could teach us lessons about changing the cultures of organizations. The book was written from the heart and gut, yet it was the head brain that allowed us to outsmart the industry and actualize a movement by getting the book in people's hands.

Looking back, my head brain was working on this book before I even opened the doors to my company. At 21 years old, I'd sit and draw images of the future I imagined.

In the drawings, I was in good health and ran multiple businesses and a foundation. In several of the drawings, I was writing a book.

Success isn't built overnight. It's not even built after you've spent three months writing a book. If you want more success at work, [Discover your work superpower.](#)

Thinking Fast vs. Thinking Slow

The head brain has two modes of thought, according to economist Daniel Kahneman. “System 1” is thinking fast. Something happens, and we feel the need to respond right away without considering consequences. This type of response is based on emotion and instinct. “System 2” is slow thinking. This is when we take time to react. The reaction is deliberate and is based on logic.

If our team had operated under the fast thinking of “System 1,” we probably would have released the book right as it rolled off the press. Instead, we were deliberate, carefully weighing the data and using it to drive our decisions. Not an easy feat, considering I’m a pretty impatient guy. Here, I had this tremendous accomplishment in finishing a book, and I had to keep it in my back pocket for an entire year.

Success is the product of a well-thought-out plan. It’s also about embracing timelessness, as opposed to being a slave to the clock. Innovation happened because we didn’t allow ourselves to become tied to an arbitrary calendar. This state comes from the head brain. If you want to succeed, you need to be deliberate about both the journey and the destination.

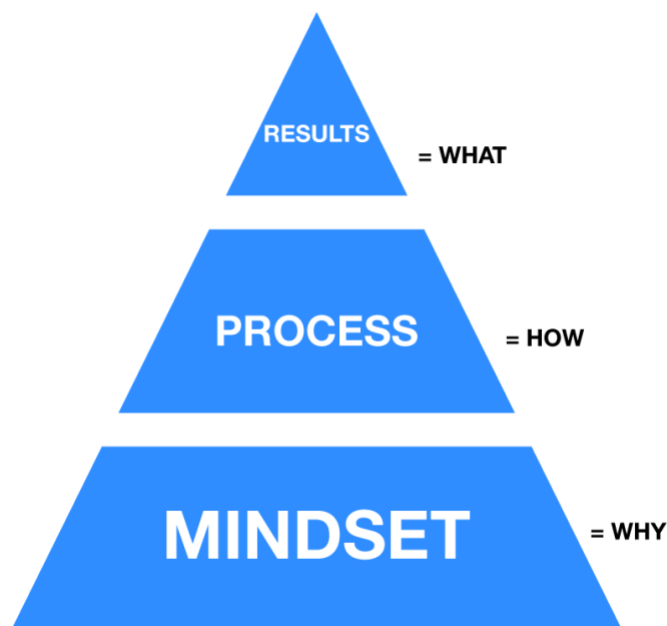


The Brain in the Head Sets Us on a Path

Let's face it. We try to tell ourselves that success is subjective, but we live in a world where success matters a great deal. People started looking at me and the company differently after the book became a New York Times best seller. Soon, the success threatened to change the dynamics of the company.

The book was a team effort. A writer and several editors helped me with the writing. My entire company put in years of work with our clients, which was the basis for the entire book. Yet, Fox Business and Bloomberg were interested in interviewing only me. I was the one invited to speak at conferences. Professionally, it put me in a different light. Fame had its way with my ego, even if I was constantly questioning whether I'd earned it. Under these circumstances, it was easy to lose perspective. A stomach infection that I developed in the second half of 2013 is evidence of how the success changed me both physically and mentally.

The stomach infection was a gut brain problem, but any solution, or cure, demanded I reconnect with the head brain, which had successfully led me to this major milestone, which I slowly began to understand was merely an early stop on a long journey. Without the head brain, our team never would've come up with a successful game plan to survive in the win-lose environment of publishing. Publishing is a win-lose environment, survival of the fittest, and the head brain's ability to identify key patterns and data allowed us to come out on top. It would be the head brain that would ultimately learn how to own the success and use it for a greater purpose. Learn more about your [greater purpose](#)



What Contemporary Brain Neuroscience Tells Us About Engagement

The head brain itself can be further deconstructed into three separate brains.

In the center of the brain we find mini-brain number one, also known as the reptilian brain. It handles the ultimate task of staying alive by regulating temperature control, hunger, and our fight-or-flight response. It's the part of the brain that keeps us safe from predators.

Wrapped around the reptilian brain is mini-brain number two, or the limbic system. It's more complex than brain one. It's responsible for our emotions, and we share it with other mammals like cats and dogs.

Humans are one of the few species with a mini-brain number three – the frontal cortex. Wrapped around brain number two, the frontal cortex allows higher-level thinking, like engaging in complex social interactions and making plans for far into the future. The frontal cortex is what enables us to innovate and act with intention.

Breaking down these three parts of the brain, we see a direct correlation to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

The reptilian brain is suited to secure the bottom two levels of the hierarchy, which are basic needs like security, food, and warmth. Climbing up the hierarchy, our needs grow to include psychological ones, like forging relationships, feeling accomplished, and being respected. The limbic system, and its management of feelings, is key to obtaining these mid-level needs.

The frontal cortex, the thinking part of our brain, is responsible for realizing the uppermost level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is self-actualization, the idea that we can achieve our full potential. As long as our progress isn't stopped by an inability to meet the needs of the bottom of the pyramid, we are free to create a life that is directed at making our ideals a reality. [Find out.](#)



Our Brains in the Modern World

Most modern work environments are still based on models dating back to the industrial revolution.

Don't let the Ping Pong tables and stocked break rooms fool you. Conformity is still king in most organizations. The employer-worker relationship is designed to satisfy our reptilian brains. Do the work and get paid, so you can pay your rent and put food on the table. In such an environment, workers aren't encouraged to think for themselves, let alone pay attention to their emotional needs or desire for self-actualization. Needless to say, this isn't a recipe for empowering employees. It's difficult for a disempowered worker to feel engaged.

Nobody has informed these companies that most workers are no longer in constant fight-or-flight mode, worried that a change of jobs will leave them hungry and on the street. We've ceased worrying about the bear eating us, which frees us up to focus on tasks bigger than ourselves.

In the workplace, the common belief that humans use only 10 percent of their brains may be accurate. That's unfortunate, considering our brains have the capability to operate like supercomputers, processing more than seventy thousand thoughts in the course of a day. Companies are basically telling workers that a majority of the information produced is useless and may even come at the expense of a job well done. They are, in effect, encouraging workers to function at a fraction of their brain power. Without an outlet for these tens of thousands of thoughts, it's no wonder that we're diagnosing a record amount of people with ADHD. Seventy to 80 percent of what happens in our brain is based on the things we see. Unless we put blinders on people, we're never going to stop the flow of thoughts.

There are real myths surrounding the power of the brain, and the reality of the brain's power demonstrates the need to allow it to reach its potential at work. People's brains don't start deteriorating after the age of forty. In certain areas—linguistic skills—the mind actually improves with age. Also, we're not hardwired. In fact, the brain is amazingly plastic, able to learn new skills, create new pathways, and rewire itself effortlessly.

What if, instead of medicating people, we figured out how to strengthen this muscle in the head, so it could be incorporated into the workplace? Used wisely, the frontal cortex is a tool to drive innovation and find solutions to our greatest problems! It's one-third of the brain puzzle that will help us Shift the Work the work. [Ready to shift your work?](#)

Set the Head Brain Free

Innovation answers the question of how to get from point A to point B in a more efficient manner.

Innovation happens after a worker spends time in the saddle, devoting energy and attention to a specific task. Only then can the worker recognize how it can be done in a superior way. The reptilian brain, by design, isn't interested in innovation. It will always take the road more traveled because its sole interest is in guaranteed results.

Obviously, a workplace can't entertain every idea that passes through a worker's head, but the solution isn't to completely shut down the person's mind. It's a question of using the frontal cortex—this supercomputer—to the company's advantage, so the worker can become empowered and stay engaged. Do you want to be [more engaged at work?](#)

My dad worked at the same company for forty years. He didn't have time to innovate. He had bills to pay. Not using his frontal cortex on a day-to-day basis didn't turn him into a dissatisfied worker, because he didn't know better. Studies show that despite their meager lifestyles, indigenous populations experience high levels of happiness. Without access to the outside world, they don't know what they're missing.

That was then, this is now. And now we know better.

We've witnessed the possibility of living a different kind of life, and yet we've found a way to be miserable for this awareness. We pretend we're stuck on the bottom rungs of Maslow's hierarchy. We tell ourselves that we're barely surviving, skating by every month, all because we're afraid of embracing the possibility of becoming innovators at work. The thought of changing jobs, careers, or mindset in a current role seems terrifying to most of us.

Putting food on the table thirty years ago was the primary challenge for many American families. In this day and age, the struggle boils down to finding coveted varieties of coffee that will impress our friends. Owning a boat used to be a big deal. Now it's about owning an island. The first step to becoming innovators at work, and in life, involves stepping outside this posture of poverty through an honest reassessment of our material lives. What if we gave up our need for brand-new cars, premium cable, the latest iPhone, and a massive house? Once we narrow our definition of needs, we can finally turn off our reptilian brains and turn on our frontal cortices.

“The Master said, ‘If your conduct is determined solely by considerations of profit you will arouse great resentment.’” – Confucius

The Dopamine Economy

Recently, I had the privilege of hearing Gary Vaynerchuk speak at an exclusive conference in Ojai, California. The message he delivered that day to 130 entrepreneurs from around the world was that the world has advanced. Businesses no longer corner the market through location or exclusivity of information and data. We've moved past the information age and creative economy. Now, success depends on one's ability to effectively engage customers and workers. Do you have the skill? [Discover your work superpower.](#)

This is how, in the early days, he transformed his father's liquor store into an online venture that did tens of millions of dollars in sales five years after the site started. It's not that he simply figured out a way to sell wine online. Rather, he developed a brand. He did blogs, which were revolutionary at the time. He also created Wine Library TV, one of the first video blogs to hit the internet. This platform gained him a huge following, partly because of his knowledge but also because his personality connected with people.

In understanding that his success was innovating ways to engage customers, it makes sense that his next venture wasn't another retail internet business. Instead, he started a company that teaches Forbes 500 companies—old, calcified institutions— how to incorporate social media strategies into their businesses, so they too can come up with innovative strategies to engage customers and workers.

Vaynerchuk was receptive to changes in the marketplace. Instead of denying the data and staying stuck in the past because of an unfounded fear of survival, he took advantage of the opportunity. Like Bill Gates, Jack Welch, and Jeff Bezos, Vaynerchuk fully utilizes the power of his head brain, particularly the frontal cortex. He's managed to free all of his minds from the constraints of patterns and time to embrace what it means to be human.

Gary Vaynerchuk has said: "How don't you stay driven... You won the lotto of the universe. You are a human being on earth... You're not some weird specimen in Mars that does nothing. You're not a bird. You're not a sunflower... You won the ultimate lottery, and you're not driven, and you're not fired up, and you're not going for it, and you're willing to sit like a lump and just wait till you die? You suck."

He's right. We should consider ourselves lucky. The right sperm met the right egg in order to create you. The probability of you being born was 1 in 102,685,000. Many people and companies are beginning to appreciate their uniqueness. They welcome the miracle of life and refuse to throw it away! It's the immigrant mindset of making sure that every waking moment counts, whether it's at work, at home, or at the store buying dinner.

Building a website and paying for a few Google ads doesn't cut it anymore for businesses. The success of a company like Whole Foods is based on its ability to tell a story about the food on their shelves. It's not just an apple, but an organic apple picked

from a family farm upstate. The innovators at these companies are utilizing their head brains in order to connect to the head, heart, and gut brains of consumers.

How We Use Our Brains at Work

Clarity of Priorities. The brain in the head is constantly assessing how to address the stream of new ideas and competing tasks we believe to be our responsibility. Our once-extensive attention span has dropped from 20 minutes to a mere nine seconds. The world is changing faster than we can keep up with, and it's influencing our thinking. The truth is, to make and manage our to-do lists, we must know and understand our priorities, the things that are truly important for us to take on, including in what order and in what measure. The sorting responsibility isn't ours alone; managers and companies also must be clear on the priorities. Agreement on and space to focus on those priorities contribute to maximizing engagement. But, according to SHIFT THE WORK's 2017 All-In Engagement Report, only 23 percent of employees are clear on the priorities that drive high performance.

We have to move past our existing paradigms and belief systems in order to embrace work with a fresh perspective. This means being open to learning new things that cater to our curiosity, inform our priorities, and drive our performance. When we learn something, our brain seeks to repeat the pattern over and over with hopes of achieving the same result. This is repetitive learning.

To develop the neuroplasticity of the brain, we need to create new bindings. We often hear how older people should do crossword puzzles, to keep the mind active. It's a good memory exercise, but it's not a good thinking exercise. Learning how to play chess, or trying to achieve higher levels of skill with an instrument, is what creates neuroplasticity. They say you can't teach an old dog new tricks, but this isn't true. We live in a world where many of us stop learning after we leave college. We are in jobs where we're set on automatic. There's reason to think this stagnation is a contributor to the plaque between synapses, which is the cause of Alzheimer's. Once we appreciate the brain in the head's ability to learn new things, we can welcome the possibilities to learn and grow. Do you lead with your head brain, gut brain, or heart brain? [Find out](#)

Commitment to Passion. The brain in the heart instigates our struggle with commitment. Leading with fear, as opposed to love, has caused our heart to give up rather than fight back or seek resolve. This is evident in divorce rates (53 percent in the United States), employee turnover, rapid technology upgrades, and frequent car trade-ins. As a society, we need to reconnect with what we believe is worth fighting for and then put in the work of fighting for it. SHIFT THE WORK's own research on engagement has revealed that less than half of the population—only 30 percent of employees—is passionate about the work they do.

We must own and feel the passion we have for our work and allow the intensity of our feelings help us achieve our top priorities.

Experiencing Purpose. The brain in the gut is torn between trust and distrust, influencing our decisions and reactions. It's what triggers our protective fight or flight instinct. Yet, with a 70 percent disengaged workforce, of which 50 percent are sleepwalking through their jobs and 20 percent are downright miserable, this tells us that those people (and their employers) are ignoring basic instincts. We stay in meaningless jobs, mistaking complacency for commitment, having lost sight of our purpose in life.

To be completely engrossed in what we do, we must know that we are having impact and be able to drive our purpose inside and outside of the workplace. The importance of purpose cannot be overstated. It grounds us, provides meaning, and serves as a guide to establish priorities, achieve goals, and go ALL IN. Yet, SHIFT THE WORK's engagement data shows that only 24 percent of employees believe their mission and purpose is compatible with their company's. We spend one-third of our lifetime at work; shouldn't it light us up? [Discover how you can help.](#)

Strategies for Engagement – Choose Your Reality, a Better You.

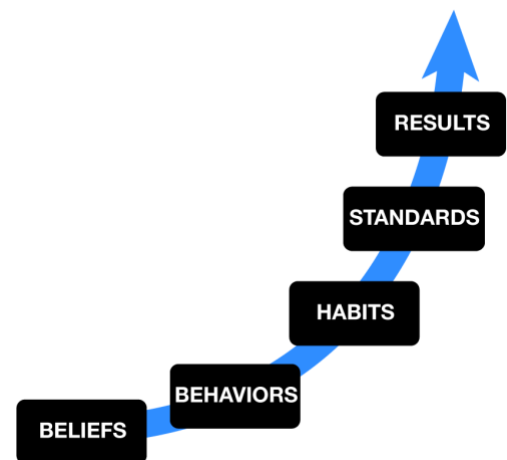
Survey the small percentage of people who succeed at following through on their New Year's resolutions, and you'll find that most didn't rely on tangible tools to reach their goals. They didn't use the patch to quit smoking or surgery to lose weight.

Instead, they used their frontal cortex to change their perspective. They dealt with the issue head-on, thinking about why they overate and all the moments in life that challenged their self-control. This allowed them to come up with an effective strategy to avoid temptation.

In short, people change their lives when they move away from a model where the past dictates the future.

It's not easy to put one's mind in the present. It takes enormous effort to attain the mindfulness to stop worrying about the future or regretting the past. A Shift the Work in how we position our mindset, so it's with us in the present, starts with how we treat our mornings.

A regular gym, yoga, or meditation routine is an excellent way to slow down the pace of our thoughts and move into this new mindset. It's preferable that we take care of it first



thing in the morning. I like to think of my days as airline flights, where I'm the captain of the plane. Most of us wake up in the morning and take off as quickly as possible. We shower and dress in record time and grab a bagel with cream cheese to eat in the car, or we just wait to buy a Danish and coffee from a place near work. This is the equivalent of taking off and waiting until you're in the air to think about a flight plan or destination. The rest of the day ends up being a game of catch-up. Forget preparing for a meeting. We're lucky if we manage to show up on time.

Mindset Model

Result

Systems and Techniques

Mindset

Back to the mantra: what you focus on you will find.

As the pilot of my airplane, I'm a stickler for routine and process. I want to examine every instrument before takeoff, to make sure it's in good working order. I certainly want to identify the destination before the plane speeds down the runway. To achieve this aim, every morning begins with yoga, the gym, or meditation. As someone who runs a business and has two small children at home, I can tell you that committing to a routine is painful at times. What pushes me forward is anticipating the feeling I'll have at the end of the day, when I see that I've accomplished what I set out to do that morning.

It's not only about starting the day right. Throughout the day, I'm constantly doing everything possible to slow down time and stay in the moment.

It's a process similar to the one outlined by Atul Gawande in his classic *The Checklist Manifesto*, a book that details how checklists are an effective way to save lives. If I have a meeting later in the day with ten people, I'll set aside one hour to prepare. If I'm going to deliver a keynote address in front of a hundred people, then I will devote anywhere from five to ten hours on my remarks. Preparation time should always exceed the length of the meeting. I'm using this time to organize my thoughts and put things down in writing. This is more thorough than trying to organize your thoughts as you run down the hallway on your way to the meeting. There's far less chance of having anxiety before the meeting starts or regrets once it's over. Instead of scraping through the day and hoping instinct will carry me to success, I'm utilizing the amazing section of my brain called the frontal cortex to my advantage.

Years ago, our team was sitting with a client, the chief risk officer at a bank. He began grumbling about how much he dreads the employee reviews. He called it the single

worst part of his job, even though he did it only once a year. At some point, I finally cut off his complaining.

“Look,” I said to him. “You don’t have to do this. You make more than seven figures a year. You can go get a different job. But if you plan on staying in this position, then honor this responsibility. Step outside yourself for two seconds and consider what these reviews mean to the people you lead on a daily basis. This will be the only time during the year that they will hear concrete feedback regarding their job performance. Your words will have a major impact on the course of their careers take moving forward. They’ll be nervous in the days leading up to the review. They’ll have people in their lives— spouses, parents—that will be anxious for them. They’ll take time preparing arguments and viewpoints. You don’t swing an ax for a living, or spend your days sweating under the sun. You work inside a bank because you had the good fortune of being born to a good family and going to excellent schools. You don’t have to do this. You get to do this.” Want to be more engaged at work. [Learn your work superpower.](#)

He mumbled and grumbled under his breath, uninspired by his great opportunity.

Eventually, he was fired by the bank.

Every moment is an opportunity to execute your vision. Don’t waste it on what came before, or let it pass you by because you’re too fixated on what comes after.

Strategies at the Workplace: Conscious Effort

Workers are like drivers heading down a dark road, and the company’s values and mission are the headlights that show them a path forward. Even if the headlights are only strong enough to show you what’s fifteen feet ahead, you still feel confident continuing down the road because you have faith that the company’s mission will keep guiding you through the darkness.

To have any chance at engaging the head brain, we need to work for organizations that have clear visions, and our roles in contributing to the mission should be clear. We must feel that we are provided with the space to use our frontal cortices to innovate in our jobs. It’s about the things that wake us up in the morning, and the ones that won’t let us sleep at night.

Core 4, a leadership exercise designed by the consultant Gerry Sandusky, starts with a few simple questions: When you meet someone, what is the impression you want to leave on him or her? How do you want other people to see your vision and values? What’s your essence?

Several of the major technology companies that have launched in the last generation are steadfast when it comes to the question of mission. Google, for example, has bought tons of other companies, some of them major, like YouTube. But they haven’t

gotten away from their original mission. Even with their many major acquisitions over the years, the look of its home web page hasn't changed.

Taking the issue of mission and values a step further, here are two more companies whose missions and values act as guideposts for how workers move through their workdays.

Glassman Wealth Advisors (a great client of ours) devotes one day per month for employees to sit and think. Football teams hire strength and conditioning coaches and set aside time for players to hit the gym. Yet, how many companies dedicate time, space, and personnel for employees to work on strengthening their brains?

Zingerman's Deli in Ann Arbor, Michigan, has what it calls its "Three Bottom Lines." Bottom Line #1 is Great Food. Bottom Line #2 is Great Service. Where it gets innovative is Bottom Line #3: Great Finance.

Every worker is supplied with detailed information about the company's finances. This effort at educating the workforce is the very definition of running a culture that treats everyone like adults and partners in the mission.

Employees who know the profits and losses connected to their specific job are more likely to innovate and produce creative ways to do the job in a more efficient and productive manner. In this environment, the person who cleans the trays off the table is more likely to bring up noticing how customers throw out a lot of unused napkins and ketchup packets. You can be happier at work, it starts by knowing a little more about yourself. [Take my superpowers quiz](#)

Rich People Have Money, Wealthy People Have Time

In most professional services that bill clients by the hour, employees are expected to account for more than 80 percent of their time at the office. If someone is spending

forty-five hours a week at work, then, at the minimum, thirty-six of those hours should be spent working. Workers cannot keep up this pace for long without burning out. Keeping up with this breakneck tempo certainly leaves little time or energy to innovate. If we spend all our time working for others, when and where will we work on ourselves? Not at home after working a nine-hour day (not including the two-hour commute).

In 2009, at the height of the recession, our company hit a wall. With the slowdown in business came the harsh realization that we weren't as good as we thought we were. We had to figure out how we were going to dig ourselves out of the hole.

How do people get better?

How do people become the best?

Last time I checked, they practice.

Some companies have mandatory training once a year. Other companies hold seminars once a quarter. We decided to devote time to focusing on ourselves. Every Friday we reserve time as a team to focus on our whole self and to engage in a company-wide activity that changes from week to week.

We've done massage therapy, acupuncture, yoga, and meditation. Some weeks we will serve the community, handing out meals to Baltimore's homeless or planting community gardens. We've invited speakers of all kinds. Occasionally, we'll gather the entire company and present a current project that is proving difficult for one of our teams in order to get insights from anyone in the organization. Another advantage of having these Fridays is that it allows for slow thinking, so that we are responding to our client's work instead of reacting to it.

We've been observing these mindful Fridays every week for the last seven years. For the last five years, our company has been named the best place to work. We've also done a well-above-average job of attracting and retaining top talent. We've been able to outthink the competition because we've prioritized the task of thinking.

You can be more engaged and happier at work. Start [by learning about yourself](#) and your strengths in the workplace.

Strategies in the Community

Low voter turnout has been a problem in Baltimore City for years. Finally, local leaders decided to act. The first step was setting up a Facebook group for the city. Anyone from Baltimore City could join to talk about the city's most pressing problems. The group now has more than five thousand members. In the last mayoral election, voter turnout increased by close to forty percentage points.

Advances in social media alter the way we think about engaging communities and organizations. The old model had community leaders coming into churches and community centers and telling people what they should think, speaking to them as if they were children, much like the traditional atmosphere of the workplace. Here, technology enables citizens to sit with ideas and thoughts, so they can respond slowly, deliberately, and thoughtfully to potentially divisive issues. Instead of reacting like children, they are responding like adults. Everyone has a say, also like adults. When they feel as though they're connecting on a higher level, there is more of an incentive to stay engaged. [Knowing your natural strengths and abilities](#) helps too.

Routines, Rituals and Rhythm

Multitasking is not conducive to clear, innovative thinking.

The head brain wants us to focus on one task at a time. Every time we switch to a minor task, like checking email, the head brain releases dopamine, a small reward for accomplishing an insignificant task. It's the equivalent of swallowing a teaspoon of sugar. Our brains like the dopamine and they want more, so the moment we return to our important work, the head brain, looking to score another hit, will encourage us to take on an additional minor task, like checking the basketball score. All this moving from one task to the other increases the stress hormone cortisol since the brain finds the constant starting and stopping exhausting. Studies show that multitaskers lose IQ points and do less thorough work.

We can all agree that the smartphone era has made the above phenomenon much worse. Getting over the addiction of multitasking—yes, it's an addiction—requires a change in behavior and routines. Fortunately, there are many tools available to help us maintain our focus.

The Productivity Planner is a daily planner. At the beginning of each day you write down your most important task for the coming day. Then, you list tasks of secondary importance. Finally, you note a third tier of tasks to be completed if you accomplish your first and second priorities. It also has a tool to track time, so you can learn to work in shorter, more productive bursts. This tool is all about matching words with actions, so you spend time on activities that matter most.

The scheduling app Calendly helps you spend less time on things that don't matter. Instead of emails going up and back between two people as they try to schedule a meeting, one participant visits the Calendly page of the second participant and clicks on an available time. In less than thirty seconds, a meeting has been scheduled.

The average American spends 4.7 hours in front of the television every day. He or she also spends more than three hours a day on his or her smartphone. That's seven hours looking at a screen. The Moment app tracks how much you use your smartphone each day. One can set daily limits, or block out times for the entire family, so everyone around the dinner table will be engaged in the conversation, instead of sneaking peeks at their screens.

Trello, Evernote, and Slack all allow organizations to coordinate, collaborate, and communicate in an efficient and streamlined manner. In our own organization, Slack helped us reduce emails by 60 percent.

Is This Enough?

Engaging the brain in the head allows us to process information, notice patterns, and take away blind spots that prevent us from seeing a different future. Once engaged, we can begin innovating at work and in our own lives. Staying the course— especially when we face setbacks or when tediousness sets in—requires full engagement with our other two brains, in the heart and the gut.

For help on how to set your weekly cadence and rhythm to spend the most of your time with deliberation and engage your frontal cortex in the best possible way, check out the hour of power at www.shiftthework.com/tools.

About Joe Mechlinski

Joe Mechlinski is a *New York Times* bestselling author, speaker, and social entrepreneur who believes that an engaged workforce is the key to unlocking human potential. Driven by his deep-rooted passion for building mission-driven cultures, Joe founded SHIFT, a collective of businesses spanning consulting, executive membership, and venture capitalism united by their common mission to revolutionize workforce engagement and transform the world.



His latest book, [Shift The Work](#), focuses on this very idea. Filled with actionable strategies and inspiring true stories, *Shift The Work* reveals the revolutionary science behind employee engagement and how readers can use the brains in their head, heart, and gut to transform their workplaces and lives, for the better.

Always embarking on new adventures, Joe launched his podcast, [Shift Happens](#), which features inspiring icons and influencers such as *New York Times* bestselling author Dan Pink, and three-time *New York Times* bestselling author Tucker Max.

About the Book

With every tick of the clock, millions of people inch closer to their breaking points—a growing epidemic of apathy and anxiety in the workplace that is affecting life outside of the office. But meaningful work-life integration is possible.

In *Shift the Work*, Joe Mechliniski, the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Grow Regardless*, shares his personal journey to find purpose, and how it influenced him to take a deeper dive into the science of human behavior. Inspired by neuroscience research about the connections between the brains in the head, heart, and gut that drive human perspectives and conduct, Joe shares how everyone can re-engage with their work and impact the world.

Filled with actionable strategies and inspiring true stories, this indispensable guide motivates readers to seek fulfilling opportunities, reconnect with their passions, and recognize their power to make a difference.



Discover Your Work Superpower Today!

You are Minutes Away from Discovering Your Work Superpower

Answer these 23 questions honestly and openly, don't overthink them. If both choices seem true for you, select the answers that is true most often, or the one that you would rather be true. When you are finished you will get your results immediately. Have fun!

[Discover Your Work Superpower - Take the Quiz](#)