

# Preface

The central message of this book is simple: there is untapped potential within the workforce that can be revealed by trusting and supporting employees to work where and when they are most effective. To take full advantage of that freedom to choose where and when to work, employees need to be unencumbered by outdated corporate rules and trappings. This book is for leaders and managers who are interested in shedding those traditional mindsets and unleashing hidden potential—within individuals and organizations.

Some may ask, “How much more productive can we possibly get?” My answer is *significantly more productive*: in ways you’ve never considered before. How are we constraining individual and organizational potential today?

- By wasting time commuting at peak traffic hours and making workers conform to a 9-to-5 routine.
- By thinking we can manage workers most effectively by seeing them in the office every day.
- By embroiling employees in bureaucracy and office politics.
- By spending too much time in lengthy corporate meetings.
- By housing employees in one-size-fits-all cubicles that are not tailored to their unique workstyles.

- By providing environments where it is difficult to concentrate and easy to be interrupted.
- By devoting resources to lavish corner offices and executive dining rooms rather than equipping employees for optimal mobility and connectivity.
- By not using our technology tools to their best advantage.
- By not trusting employees to make smart choices about the best place and time for their work.

In my consulting work, I have come across many situations where supporting remote and mobile workstyles would solve significant business problems. Unfortunately, there is often resistance to initiating these new ways of working. The hurdles to overcome are rarely technological; they are usually cultural. This kind of change involves challenging long-held beliefs about the best ways to perform work and manage people. The process of letting go, of giving up control, is not an easy one. It is essential, though, for survival in the knowledge economy.

Some companies have attempted to implement mobile or remote work strategies without dealing with the unstated cultural issues. Frustration, low productivity, and even failure are the typical results. Whether you are trying to implement new ways of working from the start, refining an existing program, or reviving a failed effort, this book will be useful. It is structured to help you identify and overcome the pitfalls that are difficult to foresee.

This book is not just about telework or telecommuting or virtual office or integrated workplace strategies or alternative officing. It is not just about letting people work from home. It is about giving individuals control over their workstyles. It is about liberating workers from the layers and layers of outdated corporate norms and mind-sets that assume management knows the best routine for workers to follow. It is about management's letting go so as to uncover higher levels of performance and satisfaction.

This book is not full of policies and contracts and agreements and forms. It is full of success stories and profound statistics that answer the question, “Why should mobility and flexibility not only be tolerated but wholeheartedly embraced?” There are many lessons to be learned from the full range of workers who already have the freedom and autonomy to shape their own workstyles. Some of the stories come from corporate employees who are considered telecommuters, virtual office workers, or road warriors. Other lessons come from leaders and members of large and small virtual organizations. There is also a lot to be learned from free agents, contract workers, and leaders of home-based businesses. You’ll hear from the people who led their company’s effort to go virtual or allow employees to work from home and learn how they overcame resistance. The examples include companies that encourage mobility so that people can support customers better as well as companies that allow flexibility so that employees can handle work and personal responsibilities. The payoffs are both tangible, such as reduced costs of turnover, and intangible, such as happier employees and families.

This book has been written for business leaders and managers who are looking for ways to achieve one or more of the following goals:

- Pursue new growth opportunities.
- Attract, retain, and develop high-quality talent.
- Maximize creativity and innovation.
- Respond faster to market changes and customer demands.
- Expand into new locations (nationally or internationally).
- Reduce costs and overhead.
- Encourage more open communication and knowledge sharing.
- Improve employee morale and commitment.

- Increase customer satisfaction.
- Optimize quality of products and services.
- Facilitate more powerful use of technology.

It is for leaders who want their companies to be considered an “employer of choice” and an admirable competitor. It is for managers who have struggled to implement new ways of working in their departments or companies with limited success. It is for corporate decision makers who can’t understand why people aren’t using the existing alternative work arrangements. It is for leaders of virtual teams or organizations who think they could be working better. It is for graduating college students and younger members of the workforce who want a different workstyle and lifestyle from that of their baby-boomer parents. It is for all workers who would like to change the way they work—for whatever reason.

The Introduction and the first chapter explain the origin of “Work Naked” and the value of remote and mobile work strategies. The next eight chapters focus on the layers of obstacles to be shed in the course of implementing each of the eight Work Naked principles:

- Initiative
- Trust
- Joy
- Individuality
- Equality
- Dialogue
- Connectivity
- Workplace Options

The last chapter restates and summarizes the eight principles, then presents a list of resources for further study and action. Start

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by reading the introductory material to get a good understanding of why these eight principles are important. Then read the chapters in any order you desire. Try reading the ones that intrigue you the most or scare you the least. Go with your gut feeling—it will probably lead you to the chapters that are most important for your company. At some point, it would be useful to have read all the chapters. The principles work together as a system rather than forming a sequence. All eight principles need to be revealed before you can realize the full benefits of freeing your employees to work where and when they are most effective.

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