

TUESDAY PM WORKSHOP # 4: BALANCING WORK AND LIFE

Workshop Session	Balancing Work and Life
Names of presenters	Vicki Robin, Anders Hayden, John deGraff (chair)
Name of rapporteur	Megan Foster

PRESENTER 1

Presenter #1: John deGraff
Title of Presentation
The <u>Innovative Practice or Strategy</u> that the speaker is presenting.
The " <u>Mainstream Practice</u> " the speaker says their strategy is an alternative to. People feel they have no time in their lives for living. We shop until we drop. And to afford this, we have to work until we drop. Though technology is advancing, we are not seeing an increase in our free time. Instead consumerism is taking over our time. We have traded technological advancement for more money and possessions – not more time. We sleep one hour less today than we did in 1968. We spend less time together. It is impacting our communities and our environment.
The <u>Alternative Vision</u> presented by the speaker (i.e. this innovative practice contributes to this vision)

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Success Factors: factors that the speaker attributes to the success of their innovative practice or strategy.

Key Challenges: the main challenges the speaker identifies in implementing the strategy

There are not enough laws to protect us from overwork. In the USA, people do not have rights to vacation. They have no rights to parental leave.

Overcoming Challenges: the ways the speaker says that challenges have been overcome.

We have developed a “take back your time” campaign and are creating strategically political initiatives to lobby for legislation in this regard. We also want people to decide to change their perspectives. Our work is attracting people from around the world. We have started a “Take Back Your Time” day – October 24. The date is significant because it is 9 weeks before the end of the year and illustrates that people in the USA work an average of 9 weeks worth of hours more than their European counterparts each year.

Moving from the Fringe to the Mainstream: the ways the speaker says this work will move from the fringe to the mainstream.

Visit the following website: www.timeday.org

Lessons Learned from this Experience - lessons learned identified by the speaker

We need to learn that even we can have a life (no matter how busy we seem, to ourselves or others). And our having life contributes to personal, social, and environmental sustainability.

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PRESENTER 2

Presenter #2: Vicki Robin
Title of Presentation: Taking back your time
<p>The <u>Innovative Practice or Strategy</u> that the speaker is presenting.</p> <p>I am making the conscious effort to live simply. I don't need a lot of money and stuff between me and the direct experience of life. If we could slow consumerism by transforming enough consumers, the whole system would slow down.</p>
<p>The "<u>Mainstream Practice</u>" the speaker says their strategy is an alternative to.</p> <p>People are snoozing through life and buying things to fill their time. By the 1990s, some people's attitudes were changing significantly but the systems and the world weren't changing in line with it. If our species continues to work too hard we will self-destruct.</p>
<p>The <u>Alternative Vision</u> presented by the speaker (i.e. this innovative practice contributes to this vision)</p> <p>We need to use social transformation to change our collective consumerist mindset and the related systems in which we live. We have to change policy and social structures. We live in a materialistic society – consumption, though not always bad, is destructive when we are consuming well beyond our needs. There are three essential nuggets we can learn from:</p> <p>Money = life energy. There are many definitions of wealth, some of which disempower us. We feel that we can never catch up or keep up. You buy money with your time. Though credit cards sometimes blur this, we need to remember that cash is what you invest in your workplace to get it. We need to decide what our money (and the time used to earn it) is worth. Life is not long; it is terminal. So what do you want to do with your time? Interestingly, studies show that, if you calculate all the money you spend to participate in the working world (clothes, cars, gasoline, etc.) we actually only take home about _ of what our paycheques read. That changes ones perspective of the latte and the SUV.</p> <p>Enough-ness. There are four basic categories of consumption and we need to find a level of sane "enough-ness". The first level is that of basic survival. Consumption in this category is of food, clothing and shelter. We get a high level of "fulfillment" from this kind of consumption. The next level is comforts. These comforts include beds, rooms, etc. They are beyond basic needs but you still get a high degree of fulfillment from the trade off of the life energy you get to secure these things. The third level is luxuries. These are things that are unnecessary but lovely. Things that make you say "Wow" are luxuries. You consider them worth the investment. But these first three</p>

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categories are only a small about of the consumption we engage in. There is a whole other category that is consumption for its own sake. We buy things to feel better and keep doing it. There comes a point, however, that the consumption can start to feel bad. We need to personally and as a society be able to distinguish the consumption that is worth spending our life energy on and that which is not. There is a place called “enough” that we all need to find. Our culture of consumerism does not support this vision – the vision that there exists a thing called sufficiency. Always question: is this survival, comfort, luxury or clutter

We should have a feedback mechanism for ourselves. We need to ask questions like

- _ “Is this worth my life energy?”
- _ “What is my life’s purpose?”
- _ “Does this consumption take me toward that life purpose?”
- _ “What is the cost to the earth of this consumption?”

Success Factors: factors that the speaker attributes to the success of their innovative practice or strategy.

Key Challenges: the main challenges the speaker identifies in implementing the strategy

Overcoming Challenges: the ways the speaker says that challenges have been overcome

Moving from the Fringe to the Mainstream: the ways the speaker says this work will move from the fringe to the mainstream.

We need to have an idealistic goal that we can make a difference. By supporting and investing in public education, public transportation, and public libraries we are able to reduce private consumption.

Lessons Learned from this Experience - lessons learned identified by the speaker

I look at it as though I am making the world safe for frugality. Our character, as people, is basically frugal and we are inclined to share. But big advertisers try to convince us otherwise. That is why they have to spend so much money on us. But we are clever and frugal and sensible. We are the living story of another way. Through speaking our stories we change the big story in which we live.

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PRESENTER 3

Presenter #3: Anders Hayden
Title of Presentation: Sharing the work, sparing the planet
The <u>Innovative Practice or Strategy</u> that the speaker is presenting. There is an alternative conception of affluence. It does not only refer to financial affluence – we can have time affluence as well.
The “ <u>Mainstream Practice</u> ” the speaker says their strategy is an alternative to. Long work weeks, low to no time off.
The <u>Alternative Vision</u> presented by the speaker (i.e. this innovative practice contributes to this vision) People all over the world are pushing for shorter work hours and a better distribution of the available work to improve our overall quality of life. Some places are becoming increasingly aware of limits (personal, societal and environmental). We need to think about free time and quality of life against quantity of production. We need to create opportunities to liberate time.
<u>Success Factors</u> : factors that the speaker attributes to the success of their innovative practice or strategy. It is working in some places, especially certain European countries. In France, the work week has been shortened to 35/hours. This has had benefits and challenges. Most people said the increase has improved their quality of life. Busy people like it when they get more time. Women especially liked the flexibility it gave to them in spending time with their families. In fact, the #1 way people spent their extra time was with family. It created jobs and unemployment fell from 12% to 9%.
<u>Key Challenges</u> : the main challenges the speaker identifies in implementing the strategy In France, the first challenge is how to pay for a system like this. If there is a 10% cut in work hours, there is a 10% cut in pay. Also there was the challenge of people feeling that their quality of work was decreasing. The push for this change was rapid and so it was difficult to absorb into the French culture.

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Overcoming Challenges: the ways the speaker says that challenges have been overcome.

Moving from the Fringe to the Mainstream: the ways the speaker says this work will move from the fringe to the mainstream.

In some places paid vacation is mandated to be 4-6 weeks each year. In Denmark, people went on strike to secure the 6th week. Parental leaves are also important. Gender equity is a main reason for paid leave and time equity.

In other places people have the right to reduce their hours to part-time work and still maintain the benefits of full time employment. For example, the Dutch.

Lessons Learned from this Experience - lessons learned identified by the speaker

Everyone has a right to withdraw from the workforce to refresh and regroup but still receive income.

We need to counter the idea that you need to work harder for less to succeed in the global economy. We will need to redefine success for this to happen. Is maximum productivity success? Certain countries don't seem to think so. Countries who work less hours have lower GDPs, however, if we measure success differently, it is probably worth it.

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SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

Workshop Discussion: Summarise statements, questions, responses:	
Name	Comment
(No One Gave Their Names Before Speaking)	<p>Q. My experience with unions have wanted more money per hour and were not open to job sharing or working less hours.</p> <p>A. Some unions have taken that position to protect full time work. With unions it helps if they think that it is their idea. There are some case examples of how this doesn't necessarily mean that employers are trying to exploit their workers.</p> <p>A. When factory workers (women) went on strike throughout the US in the early 20th century, they wanted both bread (wages) and roses (time to enjoy life). After WWII our society changed its focus and people started looking their bread butter.</p>
	<p>Q. It depends on whether we are talking about the private sector vs the public sector. Those countries that ensure labour has an equal power relationship with government and other parties (like in Europe) are making it work. It depends on the historical role and vision of the state and family. In Quebec, for example, they have a notion of their own statehood and value it like some of those in Europe. There is a historical legacy in these countries' accounts for the development in these countries. But the notion in the US is a lifestyle choice, not a pro-natal policy. Having kids is treated as individual consumption and not the states role in it.</p>
	<p>Q. There is pressure to produce. Even in ways that are not for money. Burnout is a significant factor in our struggle for balance. When the population ages, more falls to the older segment and they burnout.</p> <p>A. The non-profit/activist world has a major problem with this. We need to remain aware that just because we work "for the cause", that doesn't mean that we should expect or be required to "work forever".</p> <p>A. We should also recognize that it is largely becoming management (and not labour) that are working the most. The paradox remains that some people work extremely long hours and many other are unemployed.</p>

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Q. There are reasons why this hasn't taken hold in our society. People who are bought in are already converted and we keep talking to them. But are they really making the changes? You can tell me that working less will make me happier, but unless I see what that really looks like, I might not be able to integrate it into my life. Northern Canadian culture is an example. Highlighting existing people and quantifying it would be a valuable tool.

A. They say that the meek shall inherit the earth, but I wonder what will happen when we do, because we will be so meek. We need to speak up, speak our stories.

A. Another consideration is the whole idea of not wanting to look like a "loser". If you take time for yourself or celebrate your "non-work" time, the societal attitude is that you are lazy. Around 25% of people in the US have done things to simplify their lives. This is a huge constituency that we need to speak to.

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Workshop Discussion: Summarise statements, questions, responses:	
Name	Comment
	<p>Q. At the conference we are speaking to the converted. The main issue is consumerism. We want to buy more. I've seen nothing but a growth in consumerism in the past years. There is a diversion of Canadian and American views about this, but I still question whether people really simplify and change their life when they say they do. It really feels like we are consuming so much more. We are tied to the idea that if we don't have enough money, how will we keep buying?</p> <p>A. There is tremendous fear in the workplace now, as well. People don't want to be seen to be a "slacker" because there is a real risk of being laid off. Companies are holding their employees hostage.</p> <p>A. The Simplicity Forum is trying to put a voice on this concern. If you are questioning the dominant attitude, make a small change. And admit to your over consumption. We need to own and tell the story.</p>
	<p>Q. Reducing the work hours is something that only certain people can afford to do. In terms of convincing corporations and governments to allow employees to work less. We need to take out of hiding the real costs of unemployment and stress leaves and make choices accordingly.</p> <p>A. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Europe is more advanced because of stronger labour unions, strong social safety net. It is essential that inequality be addressed.</p>
	<p>Q. There is an interesting political party in BC called the Work Less Party. Their slogan is that alarm clocks kill dreams.</p> <p>A. It is an interesting movement. We should become "the people who play" not "the people who earn". The people of Bhutan can give us a lesson in this regard. We need to come out of the closet about slacking and start relaxing.</p> <p>A. It is not just the lifestyle impacts of this are important for good health. We also need strong relationships. The mad-consuming society of work is degrading us and that cost is also enormous.</p>

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	<p>A. The less you feel like you can count on other people in a pinch, the more you have to depend on money. Other people are important, not just irritants that get in your way. The design of existence is that people are out there for you. We are together.</p>
	<p>Q. Volunteerism is also important but our volunteers are burning out too. How do you pull back from something to create personal balance if you know, without your support, the project will die?</p> <p>A. Trying to take on the world can make you sick. The people that you are trying to take care of end up taking care of you. You need to be sound in yourself in order to make the changes you want in the world. There is a sense of mutuality in our existence that we need.</p>
	<p>To wrap up there are a few final points:</p> <p>We need to recognize that it is unions that brought us the weekend. Labour has historically been the key driving force. While it is possible that a new engine for social movement will emerge, we need to recognize how it has worked thus far.</p> <p>A cautionary tale from the USA – we are pushing this unbalanced lifestyle onto our children. In the US, 20% of school districts have banned recess for elementary school students. In Tacoma, WA, the superintendent of the school board has said that “we must maximize instruction time to prepare people to compete in the global economy”. In response we are thinking of launching an initiative called “No Child Left with a fat Behind”.</p> <p>For more information and inspiration, you may want to visit the following websites:</p> <p>www.timeday.org</p> <p>www.simpleliving.net</p>