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Searching for a Simpler Way

By Bill Jensen

Our hosts, Charlie and Jim, believe we are on the cusp of a major transformation in how we work. I couldn't agree more! For fifteen years I've been studying how work gets done. From seismic shifts that can only be seen by pulling waaayyy back, to how each individual is thrashing, transforming, coping, or even joy-riding through those shifts. (For more, see [Search for a Simpler Way study](#))

Here's a quick zoom through the revolution you are experiencing first-hand, concluding with the one thing you can do to ensure your success.

The Coming New Work Contract

Employee working capital gets stuff done. Companies use employee assets — time, attention, ideas, knowledge, passion, energy, and networks — to make the company go. The evolving new work contract is about how to leverage that working capital — and how not to.

Work is an investment. The time and attention of everyone who works are finite, and are becoming more valuable and sought-after with each tick of the clock. Every employer must answer this question: "Why should we invest these assets in you?" □

Great places to work provide great returns on employee investments. If an hour invested in your firm could be invested in a competitor for greater return, employees will leave. Every company is actually a middleman between employees, their teammates, customers, and the marketplace. *Great places to work* will answer: "What value do you create for us as we try to get stuff done?" For every day spent with your company, it must get easier to do great work, make oneself better, and make the world a better place.

Accountability is personal and two-way. In return for great places to work, employees will take on greater and greater accountability for performance, innovation, efficiency, and effectiveness. ([Read the complete New Contract](#))

Critical to Surviving and Thriving the Transition

Not everyone will reap the benefits of this new work contract. Some will glide into it naturally, some will be left behind, and some won't deserve it. Here's a clue to one of the most critical deciding factors:

If you are like most who work today, you are ADD. Attention deficit is rampant in business! And it's getting worse! For years, I've been studying the biggest timewasters in everybody's day. Check out the top three:

1. Meetings
2. Incoming communication (like emails)
3. Outgoing communication (like emails, presentations)
4. Your boss micromanaging or undervaluing you
5. Work tools and processes designed for company success, but not necessarily yours

Three of the biggest timewasters all relate to communication: how to quickly cut through clutter, then analyze, question, process, synthesize, clarify and share what matters. This is true for everyone throughout the organization — front-line clerk to commander in chief. Those who will survive and thrive the revolution's transition will be those who continually improve how they leverage their attention and how they communicate. They will guard who and what gets their attention, know how to quickly make sense of *anything*, and how to connect with others who are also guarding their attention, reserving it only for what truly matters.

If you are over 40, beware! The Net Generation (25 year-olds and younger, 80 million strong in the US) is very practiced in the skills you are just beginning to master!

To Be Strategic, Start Small and Simple

I recently conducted a leadership development course for the top 50 executives at a Fortune 50 company. The one topic they wanted the most: "How to delete 75% of your emails and not miss anything."

From the research I've done, you are probably losing between two to four hours per day(!!!), trying to cut through clutter and make sense of everything coming at you. That's 30 to 60 days per year – lost!

Go back to the big picture: Note that the new work contract counts your time and attention and ideas as assets to be leveraged. In the coming work environment, you need to know how to constantly get the best return on those assets.

Start learning how to do that now by starting small: learn how to delete more emails; write better ones; run better meetings; be clearer with fewer words; ask better questions; and say "no" more often without jeopardizing your career.

The future belongs to those who can compete on clarity!

Some resources to help you get started:

- [Free How-To Downloads](#)
 - [Free e-Learning](#)
- (Click on Free Membership, Access Code: Jensen)

Bill Jensen is a leading expert on work complexity and cutting through clutter to what really matters. He's CEO of The Jensen Group, whose mission is: To make it easier to get stuff done.

Bill is author of [Simplicity Survival Handbook](#) and [What Is Your Life's Work?](#)

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Please direct your comments and questions to comments@thefutureofwork.net. We'd love to publish your reactions and suggestions.

About the Work Design Collaborative and *Future of Work Agenda*

Future of Work is a global network of resources – practitioners, thought leaders, researchers, and senior consultants – who are committed to building and implementing physical, social, and technology-based work environments that are cost-effective, socially and environmentally responsible, and personally satisfying.

We are focused on defining the future of work and helping our members and clients achieve new levels of workforce and workplace productivity. *Future of Work* produces and distributes management tools, surveys, benchmark databases, white papers and technical reports, conferences and workshops, newsletters, books and articles, and public presentations on the changing nature of work. The Work Design Collaborative, LLC, provides leadership and infrastructure services for the *Future of Work* community.

Future of Work Agenda is a free monthly electronic newsletter produced by the *Work Design Collaborative*.

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