

Charles Handy 3

## Organizing yourself



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*Charles Handy has approached his own life and career with the efficient planning of a truly modern manager. Even if you are not a “portfolio” worker, with a fee-paid, multi-client career, the portfolio principles are highly important in getting the most out of your work — and life. Learn to choose the work that suits you, and to plan your life around that choice.*

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## **MAKING PERSONAL CHOICES**

Developments inside companies mean that you have a wider choice than ever in the way in which you can serve an organization. Handy has identified three distinct working relationships between employees and employers.

### **THE THREE LEAVES OF THE SHAMROCK**

Today's organization is made up of three very different groups of people. To which group do you belong?

- Outsourced contractor
- Professional core
- Flexible labour force

### **CHOOSING HOW TO WORK**

The choice for managers is between two of the three — being either a salaried member of the core or a fee-earning contributor of contracted skills. Weigh up the two options carefully before making your choice.

- As a contractor, you have the flexibility, variety, and upside potential of being your own man or woman. But your earning capacity is limited by the number of hours you can work and the fees you can charge, and you have very little security.
- As a salaried member of the core, you have greater security, considerable scope, and guaranteed rewards. But your freedom of movement and decision is outside your control.

## **FINDING WHAT SUITS**

If you are undecided on your best way of working, look again at the questionnaires in Masterclass 1 and answer each proposition with yourself rather than an organization in mind.

- If you agree predominantly with the Zeus attitudes, you are either a born subordinate who needs a commanding boss, or a potential entrepreneur, a leader with the personal drive that can turn a business idea into a profitable action.
- If you find you are an Apollonian, you will probably be happiest as a core professional, a salaried employee working within an organization.
- If you discover you have mainly Athenian attitudes then you will be most suited to a highly decentralized, participative organization, or to your own consultancy-type operation.
- If you find you have primarily Dionysian characteristics, then you are a natural freelance and heretic.

## **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

If you believe after doing this exercise that you are in the wrong organization, think of moving. "Have skill, will travel" is the right motto to adopt. You should also consider moving if the company disobeys the ten commandments of modern management.

- 1 Welcome new ideas - especially from below.
- 2 Insist that people need approval from only one level.
- 3 Praise when praise is due and only criticize constructively.
- 4 Encourage open debate ending in consensus.
- 5 Treat Problems as opportunities.
- 6 Use trust, not supervision, as the main control.
- 7 Operate a 'freedom of information' policy
- 8 Institute change after consultation with those affected.
- 9 Take, announce, implement unpleasant decisions in person.
- 10 Share knowledge with others and share theirs.

# 1. Balancing your life

*Handy bases his life on the Doughnut Principle. That means achieving a proper balance between mandatory and optional activities, between work and leisure. Getting the balance right is much more likely if you organize the doughnut efficiently.*

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## **APPLYING THE DOUGHNUT**

The inside-out doughnut is one of Handy's key ideas. The concept can be applied to your work alone, or to your life as a whole. Equally, it can be applied to organizations or units.

Handy's personal doughnut

At the core of Handy's doughnut are his various types of fee work to which he devotes about 200 days a year. In the outer space he has placed his charity work, which takes up approximately 100 days, and holidays, which claim 65 days a year.

## **DRAWING YOUR DOUGHNUT**

Draw your personal version of the Handy doughnut. Place inside the doughnut your core activities — the tasks you must complete to earn a living and fulfil your career ambitions. The space around the core is where you place your other activities, the voluntary ones, the outside interests, the family, and so on. Now consider your personal doughnut. Is your life all core, or duty, and no personal space, or vice versa? Most people, says Handy, seem to like a balanced doughnut with about equal amounts of core and space.

Consider your work life, too. How much discretion do you have? Is your work doughnut all core — specific duties to perform — and no space for individual responsibility? Or do you work for an organization that gives individuals space outside the core in which to take initiatives and develop their strengths?

## **CREATING YOUR IDEAL**

The principle of balance is well understood by people. Modern trends are making it much easier to obtain what you want at work — which is much more than money. When 2,000 employees were asked what mattered most in their work, half the employees questioned rated having control and being able to make decisions important in giving job satisfaction.

You may now be able to develop a portfolio career inside an organization: say, holding simultaneously a management role, a task-force function, and a planning position. That may well be an attractive option.

## **OPTIMIZING YOUR PORTFOLIO**

You have an obligation to yourself to maximize your earning power. The portfolio career is a one-person company, and must be run efficiently. Work to a business plan that will generate a satisfactory financial return. Proper planning will almost certainly reveal gaps where you need new clients or more business from old ones. To win extra business, you will need to devote unpaid time to marketing.

You must also find unpaid time for education. Learning does not belong exclusively to your school days — it is important throughout your life. What you know represents your intellectual capital, the crucial asset. You must keep that capital in excellent repair.

## 2. Achieving excellence

*Inside or outside an organization, if your results fail to satisfy an employer, insecurity will follow. Outside, whatever the quality of your work, continued employment is never guaranteed. Excellence is still the only insurance policy you can (and must) take out.*

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### **PLAYING TO STRENGTHS**

Achieving excellence is much easier if you are using your best talents, much harder if you are working in areas of weakness. Write down what you consider to be your best qualities and skills, and have them checked by somebody you can trust to be impartial and honest. Then make sure that your strengths match the work you plan to undertake. For example, do not become an independent consultant if you are shy or hesitant about selling yourself.

### **LEARNING TO IMPROVE**

Seek always to overcome your weaknesses and enhance your strengths by education and practice, by learning. That is where you not only maintain your intellectual capital, but expand it. Handy regards the learning process as having four parts:

- What is the question (problem to be solved, dilemma to be resolved, challenge to moot)?
- What are the possible answers?
- What does testing the possibilities tell me?
- What have I learnt (reflection)?

This process neatly matches the PDCA approach to total quality management: Plan, Do, Check, Act.

### **SUPPLYING TOTAL QUALITY**

Use the PDCA process systematically to rethink and improve everything you do. Some of these improvements will be known only to you, like, say, meeting a standard of replying to all letters, e-mails, faxes, and phone calls on the day of receipt. Others will be all too obvious to the client, like delivering the work at the promised time. Set your standards at the highest level, and debrief clients on their assessment of your work — preferably face-to-face. That gives you the ultimate quality control and strengthens the relationship.

## **GOING DIGITAL**

Mastering the latest information technology will both enhance your efficiency and improve your communication with and service to clients. It will also help you manage your time more efficiently.

### **MASTER NEW TECHNOLOGY**

- Use a word-processing program to generate all documents.
- Use a presentation program to create slides and reports.
- Use e-mail to speed and record most communication.
- Use a spread sheet to keep accounts and plan financially.
- Use a diary to keep track of appointments and deadlines.
- Use a personal database to list and cross-refer contacts.
- Use a scanner to help file everything digitally.
- Build your own website as a marketing and communication tool and make it interactive.

### **SUSTAINING EXCELLENCE**

Finally, sustaining excellence depends, not only on tools and techniques, but on having a long-term view. To achieve this, adhere to the following four rules recommended by Handy:

- Take responsibility for yourself and your future.
- Form a clear view of what you want that future to be.
- Determine to get that future.
- Believe that you can do so. You can.