

WHAT DID YOU DO AT WORK AND WHY?

This exercise will help you get at some of the deeper motivations behind what you have enjoyed doing in your work. It consists of a series of questions. Firstly, what exactly did you do at work? What did you spend your time on? Secondly, how did you go about that? Then, thirdly, why are these things important to you? Digging into this third question will identify the deeper motivational themes that made your work fulfilling. We have given you some examples to get you started. When you have completed the whole exercise, think about how you can fulfil these underlying motivations in the future.

How to complete this exercise

In your notebook, draw a table with headings like the one on the next page. Begin with the first question: ‘What did I do at work?’ Briefly note your answers in the top box of the left-hand column. Use short phrases, for example ‘advised clients’, ‘prepared reports’, or ‘organised my staff’. Answer quickly, without a lot of thought. Don’t be afraid to repeat yourself, but try to dig deeper as you do so.

Next, ask yourself, ‘How did I do that?’ For example, ‘by understanding what they needed’, ‘by analysing the nature of the problem’, or ‘by helping them synchronise their activities’. Briefly note your answer in the second box in the left-hand column.

Now, ask yourself, ‘And how did I do that?’ For example, ‘by listening and asking questions’, ‘by using root cause analysis’, ‘by resolving conflict between them’. Briefly note your answers in the third box in the left-hand column.

Finally, ask yourself once again, ‘And how did I do that?’. For example, ‘by tuning into what’s important to them’, ‘by

<p>What did I do at work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Advised clients</i> • • • 	<p>Why is that important to me?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I enjoy complex problems</i> • • •
<p>How did I do that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>By understanding the problem</i> • • • 	<p>And why is that important to me?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To understand root causes</i> • • •
<p>And how did I do that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>By listening and asking questions</i> • • • 	<p>And why is that important to me?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It plays to my strengths</i> • • •
<p>And how did I do that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>By understanding what's important to them</i> • • • 	<p>And why is that important to me?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It made my client successful</i> • • •
<p>And how did I do that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Being of practical relevance to people</i> • • • 	<p>And why is that important to me?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Helping people achieve their aspirations</i> • • •

understanding the fundamental issues’, ‘by helping people communicate better with each other’. Write your answers in the final box in the left-hand column. This last ‘how’ may be difficult to answer, but try it in order to get at the deeper motivations for your work.

The left side of the chart now contains a short description of what you did, followed by your three ‘How did I do that?’ responses. Before you move on, read it over and look for patterns in what you have written. Note any themes that have emerged.

Now go back to your answer to the first question: ‘What did I do at work?’. Turn to the right-hand column and ask yourself, ‘Why is that important to me?’ Note your brief response in the top box in the right-hand column. Do this quickly. Notice any feelings it evokes.

Now look at what you have written in the second box of the left-hand column. Again, ask yourself, ‘Why is that important to me?’ Note your response in the second box of the right-hand column.

Do the same for what you have written in the third and final boxes, writing your answers in the right-hand column.

Now take a look at what you have written on the right-hand side of the page. Do you see any patterns? Note any themes that have emerged. Did you have any strong feelings while doing this? If so, what were they?

Now try a comparison. How did all that you wrote, thought, and felt for the ‘why’ questions compare to your responses to the ‘how’ questions? The ‘hows’ tend towards the methodologies, the practices, the tasks involved in getting work done. The ‘whys’ more often lead to the *reasons* for work, its deeper meaning, the aspirations that lie behind it. This can give us an idea of the underlying purposes of our lives. Most people find the ‘hows’ easier to think about and talk

about with others; the 'whys' seem to lead in a more personal direction. The 'hows' tend to take us deeper into the present and past; the 'whys' move us towards the future.