



Passion In Our Workplace.



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## In this issue:

### Make Bad Pots

- [Mistakes Move Us Forward](#)
- [Tips for Creating More Time](#)

### Mistakes Move Us Forward

By Jacqueline Throop-Robinson,  
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*"Mistakes move us forward in interesting ways."*

A dear friend of mine, Ric, lives in the UK and collects ceramic pots. The pots are unusual and beautiful at the same time. One of the artists lives and works not too far from his home in Exeter. Ric would often visit this artist; and, over time, witnessed his growing popularity. He grew from an unknown artist to one whose pots were in demand and brought a handsome price. During one visit, Ric noticed that the artist was not in his usual fine form. Given a friendship which had developed over the years, Ric shared his observations. The artist's answer was simple, straightforward and profound: "I don't have time to make bad pots."

On the surface, this might seem like an odd statement. You need more time to mess up? Most of us feel we can mess up quite nicely simply by going about our business! However, I don't think the artist was referring to these type of commonplace errors. The artist was speaking about the need to take time to experiment, to develop his craft, to push himself beyond his comfort zone to innovate new pots, to try something unusual that might turn out remarkable. In pursuing such aims, however, initial results will not always be stellar: experimenting with an idea or pushing yourself beyond what you know into unknown territory might result in numerous failures until you learn what works and what doesn't. Creating is iterative and requires time and reflection on your many "starts" before the artistic vision is realized. But the artist cares enough about his idea, concept or vision to keep making bad pots until he is satisfied that he has made the pot he desired.

How many of us don't have time to make bad pots? Or don't take time to make bad pots? How many of us fill each available minute with tasks from our to-do list? Or, take on so many projects we are rushed off our feet? Or, never say "stop" to our manager who thinks all is well and we still have capacity?

Do we value downtime, silence, play, experimentation enough to ensure we build it into our work time? Most of us feel this is a luxury. Many of us have developed the habit of busy-ness, as have many organizations. One of the most common challenges in the modern workplace is too much action. When conducting employee engagement surveys, we also measure individual as well as collective emotional states. Rushing and Obsessing are two very common emotional states. Both involve high action. People are doing too much! They are pushing themselves, on a daily basis (versus by exception), to "get it all done."

The lack of reflection time enables the above unhealthy states: no downtime, no time to reflect on what tasks are truly important and what tasks don't add true value. Without time to consider and reflect, we simply try to do it all. And when we are trying to do it all, we don't make time to make bad pots. We're too busy trying to get our to-do list done rather than thinking how we can add true value. Making bad pots is essential for teams today. With the pace of change and subsequent need for innovation, our workplaces need to support reflection, experimentation, and play. Our intuitive, creative right-brain is starving for time to help us be successful!

[\(Excerpt from '50 Ways to Fire Up Your Team' © Breakthrough Learning Inc. Click here for a free sample chapter !\)](#)

### Tips for Creating More Time

By Jacqueline Throop-Robinson,  
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Think about your time as your most valuable asset and select how you use it carefully.

- **Be stingy with your meeting time.**  
I know many managers who tell me they are booked from the time they walk into the office until close of day, which means they need to work on their own commitments after hours. This is not a healthy or a sustainable state. When invited to attend a meeting, ensure you are clear on the value you will be able to attend. Do not automatically accept all invitations. Clarify meeting objectives and your role. Perhaps all you need are the minutes or you can send one of your team members instead. Or perhaps there is another way of securing the objective without a meeting. Or, use a facilitation process like *Six Thinking Hats* to create a 12-minute meeting versus a one-hour meeting ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six\\_Thinking\\_Hats](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Thinking_Hats)).
- **Identify your most productive time of the day.**  
For example, if you are a morning person, carve out 2 hours early in the day for your thinking/creative time. Perhaps even do your first two hours from home if you need to ensure you do not get interrupted. Or, block your calendar for 2 hours each day for personal work. Protect that time.
- **Let the little stuff go.**  
Do not get obsessed with keeping your email folders clean. With the rate of email this is almost an impossible task. It's easy to spend hours filing items from your inbox and sent folders. File only the important stuff and delete the rest. I know many people who spend significant time sorting through emails when they could be investing in team development, such as strategic plans for the year or finally tackling the obstacle that's been a low-level frustration for some time.
- **Bring colleagues together for "think tank" sessions.**  
When you suspect there is a root cause to an existing problem but it takes a cross-functional approach to properly remedy it, offer to host a discussion to facilitate a solution. For example, deadlines are being missed because different departments have different priorities but their work is interdependent. You may have developed workarounds but the current situation is inefficient and demoralizing. Create time to remove such obstacles and unleash people's creative problem-solving skills. Or, if multiple departments are expressing the same need for support (e.g., business process improvement), bring everyone together to see how to create a shared resource to move everyone's needs along in a meaningful way.
- **Each morning, list the three most important things you need to accomplish for that day.**  
No "should -dos" or "others want me to-dos" or "insignificant to-dos, even if they've been hanging around for a while." Instead, reflect on what three things would make the most difference to your overall goals and objectives. Write them down. Don't post them in your calendar as a task. Instead, book three different time slots in your calendar when you will work on these three items. (Make these earlier in the day rather than later so you aren't in a position to bump them for something urgent that comes up at the last minute.)

## Passion Quotes :

*"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."*

-- Albert Einstein

*"A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing."*

-- George Bernard Shaw

*"Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes."*

-- Mahatma Gandhi

*"Mistakes are always forgivable, if one has the courage to admit them."*

-- Bruce Lee

*"To err is human, to forgive, divine."*

-- Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*

*"Sometimes when you innovate, you make mistakes. It is best to admit them quickly, and get on with improving your other innovations."*

-- Steve Jobs

*"When you find your path, you must not be afraid. You need to have sufficient courage to make mistakes. Disappointment, defeat, and despair are the tools ...that... show us the way."*

-- Paulo Coelho, *Brida*

*"Well, we all make mistakes, dear, so just put it behind you. We should regret our mistakes and learn from them, but never carry them forward into the future with us."*

-- L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of Avonlea*

*"There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth; not going all the way, and not starting."*

-- Buddha

*"Have no fear of perfection - you'll never reach it."*

-- Salvador Dali

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