

## **Do it Well. Make it Fun.**

### **A White Paper...With Writing on It**

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Life is short—in a relative, big picture kind of way.

So, it's up to us to make the most of the time we do have in this world. Whether we're young and just begun our careers or we're old and cranky, there is always time to change the way we approach our work and life. Abraham Lincoln said, "It's not about the days in your life, but the life in your days." And while Lincoln was not known as a party animal, he clearly understood the need for the proper perspective.

A balanced approach is the best way to achieve success in life and work and that's the foundational principle of "Do it Well. Make it Fun." It's the idea that excellence plus fun lead to both a valuable and valued existence.

I spent the first decade of my career in hospice care. I was a home care social worker and then moved into middle management and ultimately, a senior leadership position. I couldn't have asked for a better way to begin my professional career. My hospice experience made me acutely aware of my mortality. And by working with people at the end of their lives, I realized that the best way to prepare for the end of my life was to work towards living a good life. In fact, I had a sign in my office that read, "Live each day as if it were your last—because one day, you'll be right."

I love that concept. It combines a universal truth with a bit of humor and becomes a wonderful blueprint for living. We don't know what tomorrow will bring so we better make the most of today. In his book *The Power of Now*, Eckhart Tolle suggests that we must pay attention to the here and now because now is all we have. We can't make an impact on our future nor change our past except through what we can do right now. It's about being present throughout our entire life.

The concept of *Do it Well, Make it Fun* is also about the here and now. If we are paying attention to everything we do, we will see opportunities to improve the way we manage our work and our life. The Do it Well part means seeking excellence while the Make it Fun part means making the process of what we do more enjoyable.

So if we want to add more life to our days as Lincoln suggested, then we need to find both the best and the *funnest* ways to do what we do. Let's break this concept down a little more.

**Do it Well.** There's an old joke about a man who asks a bookstore employee where the Self Help section is located. The employee says, "Well, it would defeat the purpose if I told you now, wouldn't it?"

The key to successful self help or personal development is that you have to make a commitment to yourself. For instance, doing things well means always striving for excellence. And striving for excellence means continual improvement. Most of us want to be excellent at what we do but knowing how and what to improve is often a challenge. Self awareness is the first step toward excellence. You cannot seek excellence if you're not aware of how good you are now and how good you want to be at any particular task.

I once had a supervisor who had serious blind spots. He was forever saying things out loud that were better said in his head. His comments regularly offended others creating a work environment that was unhealthy. When I suggested that he might want to improve his communication skills, he looked at me as if I didn't know what I was talking about. He felt his communication skills were fine and did not see the need to change a thing. So, he had two problems. He had poor communication skills *and* he had no insight or awareness into the problem. Eventually, he was fired. I can't help but wonder if he ever recognized the relationship between the communication skills, the lack of self awareness, and being fired. Somehow I doubt it.

To do things well, we must constantly seek feedback and look objectively at the things we do to determine where we need to improve. Do we show up on time? Do we follow through? Do we thank others? Do we put the toilet seat down? Look at the areas in your life and work that are not going as well as you wish and explore ways to improve them. If you constantly seek to do things well, you will live a rich life and what's more, you will enrich the lives of those around you. That's the power of excellence.

**Make it Fun.** I've been studying the benefits of humor and laughter for more than 30 years. And while there is a difference between humor and fun, both are important to us. You see, life contains both joy and tragedy. To appreciate one, you have to appreciate the other. Those who don't have the ability to experience tragedy cannot truly experience joy. And vice versa. Joy, fun, humor, and enjoyment are all necessary for a rich and balanced life. And it's the addition of fun to excellence that is really powerful.

If you've ever had a boss who was really good at what he or she did but was also fun to be around, you didn't mind coming to work. You respected them for their expertise but enjoyed being around them because they were fun. When combined with excellence, humor and fun create an approachability and an effectiveness that stands out.

Southwest Airlines has cracked this excellence-fun code by running a profitable and successful company where people enjoy working. The culture is fun but they do not sacrifice success or effectiveness just to achieve the fun part.

I was on a Southwest flight one day when the plane landed roughly. The pilot came on the intercom and said, "I'm really sorry about that landing folks but it wasn't my fault. And it wasn't the co-pilots fault. It was the asphalt."

The passengers were laughing and instantly became relaxed after the pilot's very effective comic relief. The key, though, is that he was also a good pilot.

The perfect icing on the excellence cake is to add a bit of fun.

**Everything is Process.** In order to combine excellence and fun, we must understand that everything we do in life and work is a process. And every process has steps. And every step has the potential of being both better *and* more fun. It's that simple.

For instance, do you remember when you took Driver's Ed? There was a series of steps you had to go through before the instructor would let you put the key in the ignition.

Here's what I had to do:

1. Put my seat belt on.
2. Adjust the mirror.
3. Make sure the car was in Park.
4. Put my foot on the brake.

If I didn't do these things, the instructor would make me start all over. Today, however, we get in the car and go. Some of us are several miles down the road and we're still struggling to put our seatbelt on. We no longer pay attention to the steps and therefore miss the chance to improve them.

In a recent training session, I asked the group to pick a process they'd like to improve. They chose the task of walking a dog. So, we outlined all the different steps associated with the process of walking a dog. They listed things like getting the leash, putting on their shoes, getting a bag to pick up the poop, etc.

Then we discussed ways to make the steps better or more fun. My favorite idea was when someone suggested putting a picture of someone they don't like on the poop bag. Then, the disgusting process of cleaning up poop would seem much more enjoyable. Now, that's how you take one step and make the entire process more tolerable!

Everything in life is a process. If you try to do every process well while making it more fun, I truly believe you will add life to your days.

Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, CPAE is a speaker, humorist, and author of four books including *Do it Well. Make it Fun. The Key to Success in Life, Death, and Almost Everything in Between*. His mission is to change the workplace culture so that organizations are more productive and staff are more content. He was the 2012-2013 president of the National Speakers Association and was inducted into that organization's speaker hall of fame. He is also a recognized expert in the benefits of humor and laughter. For more information, visit [www.RonCulberson.com](http://www.RonCulberson.com)