



Introducing the MetaWork System™

The Fourth Dimension

**THE NEXT LEVEL
OF PERSONAL AND
ORGANIZATIONAL
ACHIEVEMENT**

**Craig Hickman, Craig Bott,
Marlon Berrett & Brad Angus**

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The WorkScape Revolution

“Work is half one’s life—and the other half, too.”

Erich Kastrur

BEYOND THE JOB

Stephan Snell, a 1992 graduate of Northwestern University, works in the human resources department of Nordstrom in Palo Alto, California. After majoring in communications, he went through a number of jobs, from marketing positions at the Hard Rock Cafe to corporate communications at Herzog-Hart, a pharmaceutical manufacturing company, before he found work that finally fulfilled him, both personally and financially. “For a couple of years,” he says, “I spent a third of my time on the job, a third of my time sleeping, and a third of my time waiting for my life to start.” Like so many of his friends, members of the so-called X generation, he had no trouble finding jobs. After all, he was a bright, responsible, well-educated young man. But his early jobs after graduation gave him little more than a paycheck. “I liked those jobs,” he recalls, “but I couldn’t see my life’s work in any of them.” Finally, his third job after college marked a turning point. “I started out selling

boys' apparel in the San Jose Nordstrom. I had just moved to California and I needed a job to pay my rent. Then one day, my manager suggested I apply for an opening in human resources. Though I didn't know what the job involved, it paid considerably better, so I gave it a shot." He landed the position, and, as it turned out, it suited him perfectly, enabling him to apply both his skill at establishing rapport with a wide range of people and his training in human communications. It also opened up a career that finally satisfied more than his financial needs. "Every time I recruit and train a new associate for the company," he says with no small amount of pride, "I'm making a real contribution. So many of my buddies are still draining french fries at Burger King."

Why have so many people in our society gotten stuck "draining french fries at Burger King?" How can they break out of those jobs and discover their life's work? The answers to those questions begin with an understanding of the forces that are revolutionizing the world of work.

"HEIGH-HO, HEIGH-HO, IT'S OFF TO WORK WE GO!"

How do you feel when you go to work each day? Do you, like the Seven Dwarfs in *Snow White*, whistle a happy tune? Or do you dread the very thought of your job?

Take a typical day. You wake up early and lie in bed thinking about the work that lies ahead. Before getting dressed, you work out on your *NordicTrack* while your mind struggles to discover the solution to that tough negotiation you'll wrestle with later that morning. There is so much work—so little time. You work on your relationship with your spouse or significant other; you help your children with their homework; you assist your friends in resolving their dilemmas; and you work to balance your career and your personal life. When you ponder the meaning of your life, everything comes down to work, all the physical, social, mental, and spiritual efforts that keep you in shape, earn you

a living, and move you toward achieving all your goals, both personal and professional. In the broadest sense, your life *is* your work, and your work *is* your life. You’d think, then, that all of your work would inspire joy and a fulfilling sense of achievement, but, sadly, you probably associate the word more with backaches and migraines than with joy and fulfillment.

Your morning paper tells the sad story of displaced workers, underemployed single mothers, and young unemployed college graduates who find themselves trapped in a world of low-paying dead-end jobs. You shake your head over an unending stream of headlines announcing one major corporate layoff after another, plant closings, relocations, downsizings, unemployment rates that remain high after recessions, negotiated pay reductions, and the elimination of once-sacred employee benefits. Articles in your favorite magazines advise displaced workers to put their careers and lives back on a meaningful track. Television reports show career counselors urging college graduates to learn new skills and outplacement specialists telling how feverishly they work to turn up new employment possibilities for the victims of downsizing.

There seems to be work, work, everywhere, but little joy in sight. Not so long ago, certain futurists were predicting reduced work weeks and an abundance of leisure time. They were wrong. The high-paying, soul-satisfying, lifetime-secure job has joined the spotted owl on the list of endangered species. Perhaps, some experts argue, the demise of conventional job security opens up exciting opportunities. Scramble to rebuild your security, they propose. Make yourself more valuable and productive. If you follow their advice, however, you may come to discover that your valiant efforts only result in you doing the work of two, thus eliminating yet another job, perhaps even your own. A revolution is certainly underway, but somehow people have not yet found ways to harness all the changes for their benefit.

While researching and writing this book, we’ve talked with hundreds of business people all over the world. Without exception, executives, managers, and employees everywhere see massive changes occurring in the way people and organizations work. Their observations include these:

- If people don't continuously update their skills, they will contribute increasingly less to their organizations.
- The next wave of work activity will move beyond profit maximization or even value creation to global stewardship.
- People should prepare themselves to change jobs or contract work assignments more often and more quickly than in the past.
- Organizations will begin publishing extensive directories that not only describe what employees do, but also what specialized knowledge, skills, experience, insight, and other capabilities they possess.
- Work in the future will be defined only by those performing it, not by those managing or overseeing it.
- As the global economy gets bigger, the smallest players will become more powerful.
- The secure job will become riskier, whereas freelance work will become more secure.
- Organizations will spend much less time worrying about finding the right leadership and a lot more time worrying about spreading the right stewardship or shared responsibility to everyone, including outsourcing partners.
- Talent, motivation, and temperament will contribute more to success in the workplace than education, experience, and recommendations.
- Developing "maps" of every kind—knowledge maps, information maps, talent maps, work process maps, relationship maps, and customer maps—will prove vital when over half of an organization's workers hold their positions temporarily.
- Partnerships of every conceivable type and configuration between individuals, teams, and organizations (rather than hierarchy, command, and control) will rule the day.

- Because work that is little more than a source of income, stress, and pain cannot last, the future must provide more meaningful, fulfilling, and joyful opportunities.
- Sabbaticals taken by full-time, temporary, or contract employees to explore issues, concerns, and subjects of particular interest will characterize the next decade.
- The old world of work is giving way to a new world of work, with all of the evidence pointing to the massive shift in American work patterns and traditions that has already created a situation in which 35 percent of the work force holds part-time, temporary, or contractual jobs, or does not work at all.

All of these prognostications derive from a few basic forces that are revolutionizing the WorkScape: the demise of the conventional job and traditional hierarchical management, the continuance of globalization, the explosion of technology advancement, and the emergence of a new information economy, all of which conspire to produce an awesome force for change. The old order is dying out, but what will replace it?

BURYING THE OLD ORDER

With downsizing, streamlining, outsourcing, and reengineering programs proliferating among companies driven by the need to compete effectively in the dog-eat-dog world marketplace, a paradox has emerged. On the one hand, employers have been eliminating jobs and job security, reducing compensation and restricting benefits, while on the other hand, they have begun seeking greater employee commitment through such programs as total quality management, employee empowerment, and self-directed work teams. To their credit, those who manage today's work force increasingly recognize a need for a closer partnership between employer and employee, a partnership wherein both share the risks, responsibilities, and rewards of prosperity. The

tougher the going gets, they believe, the more they should value a partnership with employees that stresses responsibility for results, not just a job. So, where does that leave the individual worker who feels pulled apart by the seemingly warring forces of less security but more commitment?

The resolution to that paradox lies in reshaping the very heart of the relationship between employer and employees by developing a new psychological contract—the unwritten, but mutually understood and accepted agreement between employer and employee that they will treat each other fairly—encompassing the ideas of empowerment, total quality, line of sight, whole system design, self-discovery learning, and team destiny. It stands to reason that as conditions in society and the workplace change, then the *psychological contract* must also change. The revolution in the WorkSpace has broken the old contract and has created a climate that demands a totally new one. It happened before, during the Industrial Revolution, when everything about the American work environment changed dramatically. As industrial development matured and the organized labor movement stabilized, employees found themselves individually less important and far less independent, a turn of events that forged a psychological contract that resembled what Willie Loman expressed in *Death of a Salesman*: “If I work hard and fast and remain loyal to the company, I will always have a job, and the company will take care of me.” By working hard and fast within the strict parameters defined by a job description, employees guaranteed their security. One’s skills got one hired. What happened after hiring, in terms of skills development and advancement, depended on the employer’s benevolence as much as on the employee’s own effort. Employers based decision making on a hierarchical structure that generally defined the formal nature of working relationships on the job. Any attempt by an employee to circumvent the structure usually resulted in a reprimand or job loss. Although employers paid lip service to innovation and creativity over the years, and even rewarded those traits at times, such characteristics seldom appeared in any definition of an employee’s job responsibility. The value an individual employee added to the work product generally

occurred within the parameters of his or her job description. Today, all that is changing. The job no longer provides a viable way of organizing work, and in its place has arisen adaptable work units, interdependent teamworkers, results-based assignments, and shared responsibility. Table I.1 outlines the key differences between the preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial eras.

Like the eighteenth-century workers who wrestled with the effects of a dying agrarian society and an encroaching industrial revolution, late twentieth-century workers struggle with the effects of a dying industrial revolution and an emerging postindustrial society. In the midst of this current struggle, we see the need for a whole new approach to work, one that will reinvent

Table I.1. Key differences among work eras

Preindustrial Era	Industrial Era	Postindustrial Era
Small work units	Large work units	Adaptable work units
Independent workers	Dependent workers	Interdependent workers
Occasional change	Frequent change	Constant change
Little job structure	Highly structured jobs	Results-based assignments
Personal relationships	Vertical, rigid hierarchies	Shared responsibility

the dialogue between employer and employee in a way that focuses on performance and contribution, one that will, in the end, put the joy back into work. That new approach should adhere to timeless principles so fundamentally sound that they can transcend all circumstances and enable all people to succeed both financially and personally.

The new psychological contract might go something like this: “The organization cannot offer you total job security. Your employment will depend upon your ability to add value to the organization. The organization will provide the freedom, resources, and training for you to do your valuable work, and it will pay you according to your contribution.” That may sound a bit threatening, but what a world of opportunity it opens up! Your future depends on one thing only: *the value of your own contribution.*

FORGING THE NEW ORDER

In 1957, Ayn Rand published her masterwork, *Atlas Shrugged*, in which her ideal, fully integrated, near-perfect main character, John Galt, withdraws from the world because he refuses to support those who will not perform or produce for themselves. When Galt’s “strike of the producers” brings the world’s productivity to a standstill, he details his new philosophy, proclaiming that, “Productive work is the process by which man’s consciousness controls his existence, a constant process of acquiring knowledge and shaping matter to fit one’s purpose, of translating an idea into physical form, of remaking the earth in the image of one’s values—your work is yours to choose, and the choice is as wide as your mind—nothing more is possible to you and nothing less is human.” In the end, John Galt’s refusal to live in a world where producers support nonproducers sets the stage for Ayn Rand’s vision of a new American Dream in which individuals assume full responsibility for producing value and creating their futures.

A few years later, in the early 1960s, John Gardner stressed this same timeless key to a healthy, prosperous society in his bestselling book, *Excellence*. The future, he wrote, depends on “a pervasive and almost universal striving for good performance.” Gardner argued that the performance of individuals, groups, departments, corporations, institutions, and nations shapes their ultimate security, self-esteem, and fulfillment. However, while Ayn Rand’s novel and John Gardner’s treatise depict dreams of a better world, neither offers a practical guide for making those dreams come true. Rand and Gardner were idealists, but the words of idealists do not change the world unless a concrete system translates their words into action that people can actually apply to their daily lives.

Now, more than ever before, individuals feel less subject to governments, corporations, dogmas, institutions, schools of thought, and tradition. The stage is now set for a new order, a new system that can simultaneously improve corporate results and enable individuals to prosper in their individual careers. However, individuals and organizations must dramatically improve their performance and contribution to thrive in the new order. Otherwise, they will find themselves crushed under the wheels of the new economy—ruthless global competition, lightning-fast change, tremendous environmental and resource constraints, and rivals who offer “best in world” performance. Today’s blossoming technology enables individuals to think of themselves as self-contained small businesses, unique self-directed forces, whether individual or organizational, that can and will shape the future of enterprise.

However, technology, which helps people do more for less, does not provide the final answer. Although it may help someone attain a higher level of productivity, it doesn’t supply enough power on its own to shape the new order, including the new psychological contract between employers and employees. As the German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, observed in 1851, “Every man takes the limits of his own field of vision for the limits of the world.” Men and women act, or are acted upon, according to their views of work and life. To enlarge people’s field of vision with a broader, deeper definition of