

Time, Talent, Energy

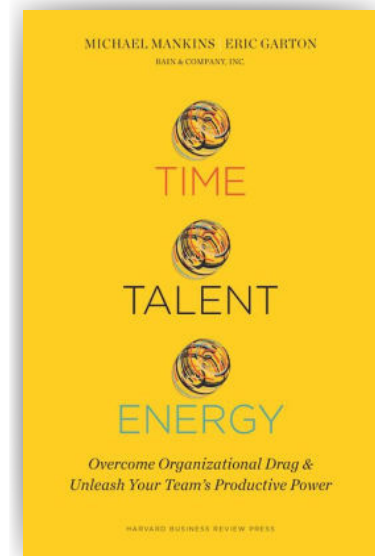
Overcome Organizational Drag & Unleash Your Team's Productive Power

Michael Mankins and Eric Garton

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KEY CONCEPTS

Leaders can enhance their organizations' productive power and overcome the drag that reduces efficiency by maximizing three essential resources:

1. *Time* is a scarce organizational asset that is often misused and poorly managed. Leaders can dramatically improve workplace productivity by emphasizing effective time management and implementing tested plans to reduce organizational bloat and complexity.
2. *Talent* is a key differentiator between average and highly productive organizations. Leaders can maximize their organizations' productivity by attracting and retaining exceptionally talented people. These "difference makers" possess unique skills and experiences and can work collaboratively on initiatives that are critical to an organization's success.
3. *Energy* is an intangible but powerful force that enables companies to accomplish great things. Leaders who learn to boost and harness their organizations' energy can multiply the impact of their employees' time and talent. The key is to tap the power of engagement, inspiration, and a strong company culture.

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

When leaders excel at managing scarce resources, they gain a powerful advantage over their competitors. In today's economy, the scarcest resources are the time, talent, and energy of the people within an organization—and far too often, these resources are ineffectively managed. In **Time, Talent, Energy**, Michael Mankins and Eric Garton provide organization-wide solutions that leaders can use to maximize their businesses' productive power, overcome organizational drag, and gain an edge over their competition.

An Organization's Productive Power—and How to Unleash It

The business world moves at a breakneck pace—yet in many organizations, work moves slowly. Employees may find their days filled with lengthy meetings, emails, bureaucratic delays, and indecision. This phenomenon—organizational drag—not only decreases employees' output; it also raises costs and demoralizes people, reducing the energy and enthusiasm that they bring to their work. Organizational drag can affect the most capable of leaders and employees. Its presence is unwanted, unproductive, and unsupportive of an organization's goals.

Organizations can reduce organizational drag, boost productivity, and maximize output by actively managing how their people utilize three vital resources: *time*, *talent*, and *energy*. When they learn to manage all three factors effectively, they find a renewed sense of productivity and purpose that enables them to consistently outpace their competitors.

PART ONE: TIME

Liberate the Organization's Time

In most organizations, time goes largely unmanaged. Business professionals fill their days with unproductive phone calls, emails, meetings, and conferences and find little time for value-adding activities. With minimal controls in place to manage employees' time, organizations in every industry are finding themselves burdened by organizational drag.

Many time-management experts advise employees to gain control over their emails and to be selective about the phone calls and meetings they take part in, but individual actions alone cannot fully counter organizational drag. Instead, organizational leaders need to take a holistic approach to reducing drag and helping employees maximize their productivity.

Organizations can realize tremendous time savings by investing their time as carefully as they invest their money. A number of innovative practices can help, such as:

- *Ruthlessly setting priorities.* Apple executives make a point of prioritizing a small number of initiatives and focusing exclusively on those goals. While leaders of other organizations may not need to apply quite as narrow a focus, they can follow the spirit of this approach—for example, by requiring a solid business case for every initiative and assigning an executive to oversee each initiative's progress and adherence to budget.
- *Creating a fixed time budget and striving to reduce it.* Leaders can enhance daily productivity by scrutinizing scheduled meetings and determining whether attendees are spending their time efficiently and effectively. They may also choose to establish a fixed amount of time for meetings and other activities to minimize the potential for organizational drag.
- *Establishing clear delegations of authority for time investments.* Organizations can implement restrictions on who may call meetings. They may choose to train their employees on how to select attendees and how long meetings should last in order to minimize lost productivity.
- *Creating a new protocol for e-communications.* Many companies have benefitted from the establishment of rules for email exchanges and other forms of electronic communications. Organizations may decide to limit the number of emails, discourage replies to emails that are meant simply for informational purposes, and deter people from copying unessential recipients.

Workforce productivity is primarily an organizational problem and so requires organizational solutions. Unless companies identify and remove the organizational obstacles to getting things done, they will never generate great results.

- *Providing real-time feedback to manage organizational load.* Leaders can track meeting times, meeting attendance, and email volume to gain an understanding of the factors that have the greatest impact on productivity. They can then set targets for improvement.

Leaders can also improve productivity by running meetings efficiently, ensuring that every one fosters collaboration and leads to clear decisions. The purpose and agenda of every meeting should be clearly defined, and participants should arrive at the meeting prepared to discuss the topic at hand.

The most effective organizational change requires a company-wide effort. When employees realize the value that can be gained through effective time management, they feel less burdened by their workloads and are able to maximize their daily productivity.

The real source of organizational drag is unnecessary tasks, murky accountabilities, and the complexity that produces them.

Simplify the Operating Model

While effective time management can dramatically boost productivity, organizations that want to reduce organizational drag must also reduce the complexity and bloat of their business units, functions, and task forces. The drag that results from these factors stems primarily from an abundance of unnecessary tasks, unclear responsibilities, and organizational complexity.

Before tackling this issue, leaders must understand the origins of complexity. It is the natural result of organizational growth. As companies expand, they typically add new product lines and business units and open new channels, segments, and geographic regions. All of these elements must interact with one another, and the number of “nodes” of interaction among units increases geometrically.

Reducing complexity requires understanding a company’s operating model. The operating model outlines the company’s structure and provides a link between strategy and execution. It defines the shape and size of each business, the boundaries between lines of business, the ways in which people work within and across these boundaries, how the corporate center adds value to the business units, and the norms and behaviors that the organization wants to encourage. Because they encompass so many aspects of an organization, operating models tend to be highly complex.

Leaders can begin the attack on complexity by mapping decision-making processes within their organizations. They can determine the number of nodes that are necessary for efficient operation. They can study the structure, accountabilities, governance, and organizational working styles and identify components that can be simplified or eliminated to enhance efficiency. Finally, they can reconsider their organizational pyramids to reduce the number of people who do not add value in making or executing decisions.

PART TWO: TALENT

Find and Develop the “Difference Makers”

Companies that take steps to reduce organizational drag will help their people save time and enhance their productivity, but time savings alone will not help companies reach their full potential. The most productive organizations also attract, retain, and deploy their people in ways that maximize their output.

Top talent—people who offer unique sets of skills and experiences and can collaborate with others on important initiatives—are critical to an organization’s success. Most leaders recognize the importance of placing these difference makers in jobs that will allow them to have the greatest impact, but conventional hiring techniques, hierarchies, and job assignment philosophies make it difficult for organizations to find, develop, and deploy top talent effectively. Leaders can boost the impact of talent on workforce productivity by:

- *Determining where their difference makers can make the biggest difference.* Business leaders can identify the talent and capabilities that are needed to build a competitive advantage, and then look for alignments and disconnects within their organizations. When leaders understand where their organizations need differentiated capabilities and can identify their business-critical roles, they can determine how best to deploy their difference makers.
- *Using better ways to find difference makers.* Leaders can apply quantitative and qualitative techniques to measure potential as they work through their hiring, promotion, and development processes. Common techniques include hiring candidates who exhibit well-defined, specific behavioral signatures; who demonstrate learning agility; who possess collaborative intelligence; and who show the potential for long-term growth.
- *Making the difference makers more effective.* Leaders can regularly evaluate their human resources practices and invest in coaching to help their top talent grow and develop in appropriate ways. They can also review how they approach talent rotation. It often makes sense to encourage multiyear missions with well-defined milestones and opportunities for measurable accomplishments.

Create and Deploy All-Star Teams

The most productive companies typically do not possess more top talent than other companies. Rather, they focus on effective deployment and utilization of their difference makers.

Many companies pay more attention to their finished products than they do to the collaboration, teaming, and deployment that create those products. But these concepts are crucial to enhancing performance. Leaders can improve their organizations' results by thoughtfully assembling all-star teams, or teams consisting of top players, and then deploying them to execute mission-critical initiatives. When top players work together, they act as a force multiplier that can produce greater and higher-quality output.

Great teams act as a kind of force multiplier. They allow people—particularly top performers—to achieve more than they ever thought they could.

All-star teams can reach their full potential when the following elements are in place:

- *Great leadership.* Leaders of all-star teams must themselves possess A-level talent and be capable of encouraging peak performances from their team members.
- *Proper leveraging of the “extra milers.”* Team leaders must identify the team members who are engaged in and committed to making the initiative a success and use them to motivate other team members and encourage effective collaboration.
- *The right incentives—and no disincentives.* Companies should track and reward team performance instead of focusing solely on individual accomplishments, which may foster competition instead of collaboration.
- *Great support.* All-star teams require top-level support from people who can effectively tackle routine tasks and allow team members to focus on what they do best.
- *Big goals to neutralize big egos.* Leaders can help their top talent set aside their egos by defining big missions and inspiring them to put those missions first. This approach can result in the development of a collective ego that overshadows individual egos.
- *Avoid overshadowing.* Leaders must realize that rewarding top performers can make other employees feel undervalued. They may want to share the celebration of achievements with their entire groups, recognize outstanding performance in non-mission-critical activities, and establish shared rewards.

PART THREE: ENERGY

Aim for Inspiration (Not Just Engagement)

While time and talent are two components that can dramatically increase a company's performance, *organizational energy* is another significant element of productivity. Energy is a powerful force that has the potential to improve companies' results significantly.

Individuals affect organizations and organizations shape individuals. This is especially true of culture. Culture emerges from the cumulative behaviors of individuals, but that behavior is greatly influenced by a company's purpose, values, beliefs, and customary ways of working.

Organizational energy can be difficult to harness, but the price of disengagement is high. When employees are disengaged, they do not give their organizations much of their discretionary energy, harming productivity. Low levels of engagement may stem from many factors, including a lack of autonomy, uninteresting work, disingenuous or unreachable goals, and little room for learning and growth.

Research shows that the biggest breakthroughs in organizational energy happen when employees feel not just engaged but inspired by their roles and organizations. Inspired employees become difference makers who encourage their peers to attain new levels of performance. They are involved in the content of their work and engaged because of their connections with others, and they believe deeply in their organizations' goals.

Organizational leaders can employ three approaches to foster inspiring organizational engagement and create environments where people want to work:

1. *Develop and implement humane philosophies.* Organizational leaders can engage their employees by building people-centric, empowering environments where individuals can link their own roles and missions to their organizations' purposes.
2. *Balance employee autonomy with organizational needs.* Leaders should strive to balance autonomy with accountability, freedom to innovate with proven routines, and alignment with a degree of control. Such a balance will help to maximize engagement, efficiency, and performance.
3. *Develop leaders who deliver results and inspire.* Senior executives must invest in innovative, focused leadership development programs to create leaders throughout their organizations who can deliver outstanding results and inspire their employees.

Build a Winning Culture

Winning cultures are a hallmark of nearly every successful company. They can provide a sustainable competitive advantage, serve as a defense against organizational stagnation and complexity, attract top-tier talent, and foster the collaboration and engagement that are critical for increasing productivity.

Leaders can shape their organizational cultures by establishing meaningful purposes; by demonstrating winning values, such as integrity, accountability, and agility; and by reinforcing beliefs that are unique to their company's industries, strategies, and heritages. These factors must be strengthened by the organizational environment, including operating models, talent systems, rewards, consequences, and leadership efforts that affect how employees work and behave.

Winning cultures can be established in any organization. Leaders can ignite performance cultures by:

- *Raising the strategic ambition and recentering their purpose.* Leaders need to define the purposes, values, and behaviors that influence how employees work and provide context for individual and team missions. Bold ambitions and compelling visions are essential for leaders who hope to inspire change.

- *Reawakening the ownership mindset.* Leaders must also select a small number of important behavioral changes and focus on embedding them within their organizational cultures. These changes may be embedded through the purposeful disruption of pre-established behaviors and the introduction of routines that diminish the less effective parts of an existing culture.
- *Resetting ways of working and talent plans.* Leaders can redefine their ways of working and help their people modify their actions by encouraging culture-strengthening behaviors. Leaders can also assess their talent plans and renew their talent acquisition strategies, leadership behavior signatures, and talent-management systems to attract difference makers.

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Estimated Reading Time: 4–5 hours, 240 pages

In **Time, Talent, Energy**, Michael Mankins and Eric Garton provide an organizational framework that can help leaders maximize their companies' productive power, reduce the causes of organizational drag, and thereby outpace their competitors. CEOs, organizational leaders, and managers at every level can realize tremendous benefits by learning to manage the three scarcest resources in today's economy: *time*, *talent*, and *energy*. Each chapter includes in-depth examples, research, and insight into maximizing an organization's productive power. Some chapters include assessments, figures, and callouts that clarify the concepts presented. This book can be read one chapter at a time in any order.

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