

The Meaning of  
Work:  
Fulfilling the  
Greater Hunger

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The Meaning of Work...

*Working*, Studs Terkel  
Footwork:  
[John Fuller](#)

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The Meaning of Work...

- What is 'work'?  
...and what is meant by 'meaning'?
- What do you stand for?
- What are the dimensions of meaningful work?
- How can you insure that your own work is meaningful?
- How can you create the conditions under which others find work meaningful?

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## The Meaning of Work...

- **work**, *n.*, 1. exertion or effort directed to produce or accomplish something; labor; toil.

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## The Hungry Spirit...

“We need the chance,  
in our work, not just in our leisure,  
to discover some of the truth about ourselves.”

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## The Meaning of Work...

- **meaning**, *n.*, 2. the end, or purpose, or significance of something.

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The Meaning of Work...

*The Hungry Spirit*

*Beyond Capitalism:  
A Quest for Purpose  
in the Modern World*

Charles Handy

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The Hungry Spirit...

“In Africa, they say that there are two hungers, the lesser hunger and the greater hunger. The lesser hunger is for the things that sustain life, the goods and services, and the money to pay for them, which we all need. The greater hunger is for an answer to the question ‘why?’, for some understanding of what that life is for...”

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The Hungry Spirit...

“In the capitalist societies, however, it has been our comfortable assumption, so far, that we can best satisfy the greater hunger by appeasing the lesser hunger.”

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Finding Meaningful Work...

*What Comes Next*  
Jim Collins

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Finding Meaningful Work...



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What you stand for...

*Working*, Studs Terkel  
*The Quiet Life:*  
Donna Murray

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## What you stand for...

Five characteristics of a good expression of core purpose:

- Inspiring to those *inside* the company;
- Something that could be as valid 100 years from now as it is today;
- Helps you think expansively about what you *could* do but aren't doing;
- Helps you decide what *not* to do;
- Truly authentic to your organization

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## What you stand for...

- ↑ To make people happy...
- ↑ To give ordinary folk the chance to buy the same things as rich people...
- ↑ To give unlimited opportunity to women...
- ↑ To make people away from home feel that they're among friends and really wanted...

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## What you stand for...

If you woke up in the morning and suddenly had \$20 million in the bank and 5 years to live...

What are those things that you would continue to do?

What are those things that under those circumstances you'd stop doing?

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### Personal reflection...

■ Continue to do...

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### Personal reflection...

■ Stop doing...

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### The Hungry Spirit...

“Proper selfishness...

...requires that we take our identity into our own care, provided that we give it a reality check with those who know us.

We define, for ourselves, who we are and what we stand for.”

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Group reflection...

■ THE BIG IDEA: Your organization and the goals that express what the organization stands for...

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■ THE BIG IDEA: You and the goals that express what you stand for...

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The Meaning of Work...

*Working*, Studs Terkel

The Mason:  
[Carl Murray Bates](#)

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What you are good at...

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The Meaning of Work...

*Working*, Studs Terkel

A Pecking Order:  
Roberta Victor

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What people will pay you to do...

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*The Principles of  
Scientific Management*

Frederick  
Winslow  
Taylor

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### The Wealth of Nations...

“The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations...has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention...

He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become.”

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### The Meaning of Work...

- Stories reveal meaning...  
and it is now time to consider just what each of these stories is telling us.

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### Group reflection...

- THE ATTRIBUTES OF MEANINGFUL WORK:

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## George Bernard Shaw...

“This is the true joy in life...  
being used for a purpose  
recognized by yourself  
as a mighty one...”

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## The Attributes of Meaningful Work

- Work which:
- ↑ reflects core values
- ↑ contributes to the greater good
- ↑ permits autonomy
- ↑ fulfills one's 'calling'
- ↑ leaves a legacy
- ↑ provides a challenge

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## The Attributes of Meaningful Work

- Work which:
- ↑ builds relationships
- ↑ continues a tradition
- ↑ exhibits pride in craftsmanship
- ↑ connects one with nature
- ↑ offers diverse experiences
- ↑ is fairly compensated

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## The Hungry Spirit...

You must become  
the change you want to see in the world.

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## Reflection...

- Develop one mechanism for increasing meaning in your own work life...

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## Reflection...

- Develop one mechanism for enhancing the opportunity for direct reports to experience more meaning in their work lives...

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## Reflection...

- Mechanisms [are] the practices that bring what you stand for to life and stimulate change.
- Mechanisms force things to happen that reinforce your...core purpose, converting that purpose into action.
- If I have a mechanism, I don't need the intention, because the mechanism will make things happen even when I'm not focused on them.

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## The Meaning of Work...

*Working*, Studs Terkel  
The Age of Charlie Blossom:  
Bud Freeman

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## David Walcott...

The time will come  
when, with elation,  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror,  
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

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David Walcott...

and say, sit here. Eat.

You will love again the stranger who was yourself.

Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

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David Walcott...

all your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.

Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,  
the photographs, the desperate notes,  
peel your own image from the mirror.

Sit. Feast on your life.

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