"The first step on the road to high performance begins with a choice."

Great Systems Job Design Work System Improvement Tips

Kevin McManus, Chief Excellence Officer, Great Systems

How do you measure and improve your job design work system?

Time is the ultimate constraint when it comes to organizational performance improvement.

We are at a point in our workplaces where we can rarely expect to get more hours per week out of our people. In America, we already put in more workdays and hours per year than most countries.

Additionally, more and more people claim that they are too busy. Worse yet, stress levels and burn out rates continue to rise.

How can we measure, analyze, and improve our job design work system to help address such problems?

The Job Design Power System

HP Job Description:
Shows key job tasks and behaviors, and the time needed to meet company goals

Time Summary Blueprint:
Visually allocates time between projects and processes, and shows degree of involvement

Team Infrastructure Blueprint:
Gives you a clear framework for better utilizing the skills of your people

HP Job Description

Time Summary Blueprint — Team Infrastructure

Cultural Challenge:
Reactive approaches to process management and improvement

Key Leverage Point:
Measure how managers and supervisors use their time each day

greatsystems.com

© Copyright 2024, Great Systems LLC, All Rights Reserved

Greatsystems.com

Also, the need to maintain a work-life balance has become more and more important to our employees. With all these factors in play, many leaders still try to get more out of their people. How often do you feel that people expect you to 'do more with less'? Great job design matters today more than ever.

If there was ever a time where we need to 'work smarter, not harder', it is now. High performance organizations - those that truly sustain high 'daily kaizen' levels and operational excellence - have figured this out.
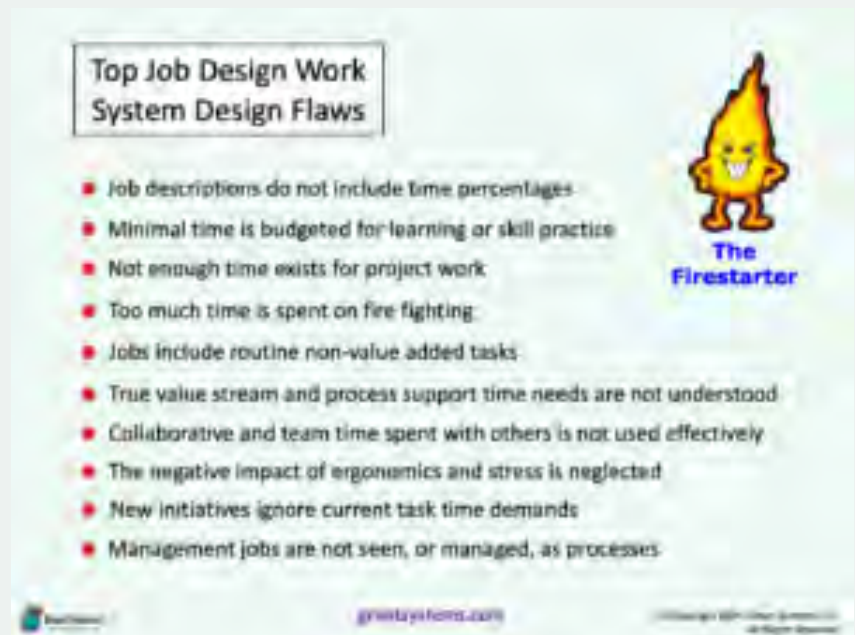
They have torn down their silos. The old way of thinking was replaced with one that is value stream and process focused. They have streamlined their team infrastructures and aligned and coordinated their meetings. Waste has been removed out of all key processes, while also increasing customer value.

Can all organizations achieve similar results?

The short answer is 'Yes, they can.' Leaders must rethink their organizational job designs, and not just those people use to work on the front lines.

Today, our greatest organizational waste streams exist in the middle and upper management levels.

Simple headcount reduction in these areas won't systematically change the manner in which people do their work each day. We must systematically change our job designs.

Top Job Design Work System Design Flaws

- Job descriptions do not include time percentages
- Minimal time is budgeted for learning or skill practice
- Not enough time exists for project work
- Too much time is spent on fire fighting
- Jobs include routine non-value added tasks
- True value stream and process support time needs are not understood
- Collaborative and team time spent with others is not used effectively
- The negative impact of ergonomics and stress is neglected
- New initiatives ignore current task time demands
- Management jobs are not seen, or managed, as processes

The Firestarter

greatsystems.com

Time is the ultimate constraint to process excellence and high performance. We can't go to the bank and get more time. It is also unreasonable to expect our people to give us more time than they are already giving us.

In turn, if we want to go faster and get better results, we must use this limited resource more effectively.

EXPLORE MORE: Find more FREE continuous improvement resources at my Great Systems website!

Why is great job design critical to high performance?

Most organizations have job descriptions, but many fail to specify in those one- or two-page documents how people should spend their time on the job.

Most often, it the case that a list of expectations exists, along with regular job tasks. There is no reference to the percent of time one should use in these areas. Why are time percentages necessary?

Time percentages are necessary for two reasons. First, time and money are the two main things we invest on the job each day.

What is a Time Summary Blueprint?

Position / Function	Headcount	Avg. Wage / Hour	% of Time			Hours / Year			Cost / Year		
			Projects	Processes	Planning	Projects	Processes	Planning	Projects	Processes	Planning
Director / VP / CEO	7	$50	40%	20%	40%	5,628	2,814	5,628	$281,400	$140,700	$281,400
Manager	5	35	40%	30%	30%	4,020	3,015	3,015	140,700	105,525	105,525
Supervisor	7	24	30%	50%	20%	4,221	7,035	2,814	101,304	168,840	67,536
Lead Person	6	18	10%	70%	20%	1,206	8,442	2,412	21,708	151,956	43,416
Sales / Marketing	14	25	20%	60%	20%	5,628	16,884	5,628	140,700	422,100	140,700
R & D	2	20	60%	20%	20%	2,412	804	804	48,240	16,080	16,080
Production	35	12	10%	90%	0%	7,035	63,315	0	84,420	759,780	0
Warehouse	6	13	10%	90%	0%	1,206	10,854	0	15,678	141,102	0
Quality Assurance	3	19	40%	50%	10%	2,412	3,015	603	45,828	57,285	11,457
Human Resources	2	23	40%	50%	10%	1,608	2,010	402	36,984	46,230	9,246
Accounting / IT	5	23	30%	50%	20%	3,015	5,025	2,010	69,345	115,575	46,230
Purchasing	1	28	40%	40%	20%	804	804	402	22,512	22,512	11,256
Maintenance	3	18	20%	70%	10%	1,206	4,221	603	21,708	75,978	10,854
Sanitation	4	10	10%	90%	0%	804	7,236	0	8,040	72,360	0
Totals / Avg.	100	$20	29%	56%	16%	41,205	135,474	24,321	$1,038,567	$2,296,023	$743,700

Great Systems!   greatsystems.com   © Copyright 2024, Great Systems LLC, All Rights Reserved

In turn, when we spend our time in areas where we don't need to, or in areas that don't give us that much performance improvement leverage, we create waste.

When we identify expectations in job descriptions, but fail to also include time percentages, we assume that people will spend their work time wisely. Unfortunately, humans have proven to be less than dependable when it comes to wise time usage.

Do you know what your major time buckets cost?

Second, most people do not do a very good job of tracking how they spend their time each day. This is especially true if you work in an environment that focuses on crisis.

As you get caught up in a crisis, your emotions overwhelm your mind's ability to keep track of time. Similarly, when you intensely focus on task execution, it is difficult to track the minutes and hours that pass.

Time is the ultimate constraint to process excellence and high performance. We can't go to the bank and get more time. It is also unreasonable to expect our people to give us more time than they are already giving us.

In turn, if we want to go faster and get better results, we must learn to use this limited resource more effectively.

Where is the bulk of the time waste in your workplace?

Organizations invest a lot of time and money to define h ow time is spent on front line work. As an Industrial Engineer, I can personally measure down to the tenth of a second how long it should take to do such work.

On occasion, I have been asked to take a similar look at middle management-level jobs. This practice was much more the exception than the rule.

In our current applications of lean six sigma and process improvement approaches, we continue to focus a

disproportionate amount of time on front line work team job performance. We largely ignore the waste that exists in our higher wage rate leadership and process support jobs.

I believe that we have reached a point in the evolution of business where we have 'nickel and dimed' front line work team performance to death. At the same time, we largely ignore the time inefficiencies of management. This ignorance appears to become greater as you go higher up in the organization.

Should we assume that because we pay these people so much money, they are solely responsible for spending their time in the best way possible? Think about it!

How often does your job design work system provide enough time for improvement?

If you do not invest enough time with people, and on process improvement (primarily projects and data analysis), you can't improve. It's that simple. Unfortunately, in most organizations, we limit the amount of formal process improvement time that exists in our prevailing managerial job designs. We must take waste out of these jobs to 'find improvement time.'

Until we do so, we will struggle to make the shift from reactive management to proactive management. We must improve our job design work system. To do this, we must find support work process waste and make changes to eliminate it. This will create more time for improvement. Do you need to improve your job design work system?

How many teams do you have? How effective are your teams? Are they really working on the right things? Using the Team Infrastructure Blueprint to identify current and future teams needs can help you keep from wasting limited resources on team activities.

Greatsystems.com

How does each team member spend their work time each day?

Who makes more per hour, a front-line employee or a manager? Does this wage rate increase or decrease as you move upwards on the organizational chart?

Who in your company measures their personal time use on an hour-by-hour basis? Which work groups have their time measured by someone else?

What are the reasons for measuring the low wage rate people to a high degree and only measuring the people that make a lot more money per hour only at times, if at all?

Would it help if you chose to make some changes in your time measurement practices? Do your managers spend their time in a way that increases customer value? How do they know?

These questions are important to consider if you desire to have a high-performance workplace. If this is your goal, please give thought to the logic shown in the example chart below. In high performance workplaces, people spend more of their work time with others than they do alone.

If your new job involves more work with others, shouldn't you not hold yourself to the same set of time measurement and usage standards?
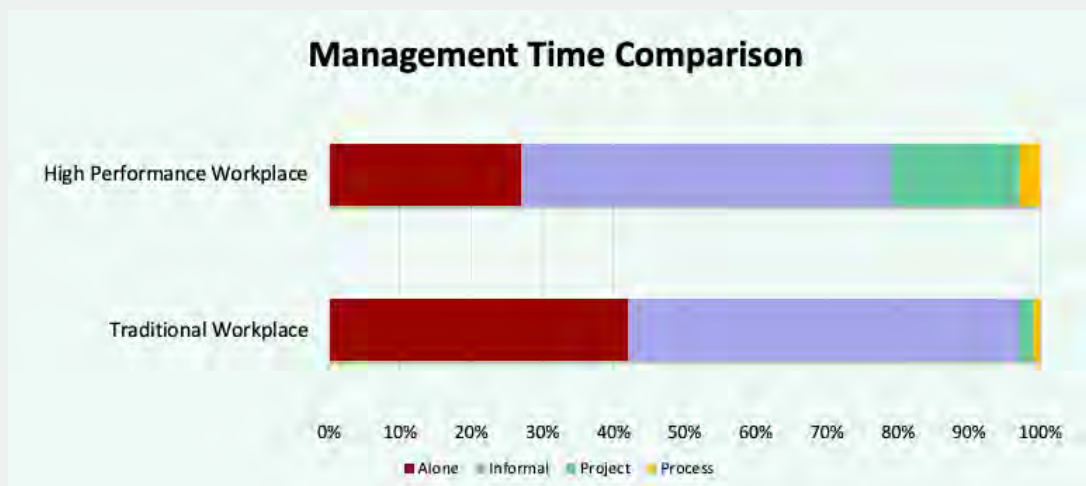
How can I help you improve your job design work system?

For over 40 years, I have helped a variety of different organizations improve their job design work systems, both at the front line and management levels.

Through personal experience and learning, I have discovered systematic approaches for reducing Leader Standard Waste.

Examples include meeting and e-mail waste and off-task / redundant job descriptions.

Effective team infrastructure redesign is also necessary to help find mor e improvement work time.

How to Improve Your Job Design Work System

Here are ten ways to build a great job design work system:

- Build time percentages into each of your company's job descriptions
- Budget time for learning, skill practice, and projects into every job
- Use a time-summary blueprint to analyze how job time is spent across the company
- Measure time usage consistently across the organization – from top to bottom
- Optimize how you spend time in all group events, such as training and meetings
- Create a plan to shift how time is spent as the months go by – don't rely on overtime
- Minimize / eliminate non-value added time from EVERY job and work process
- Recognize that current tasks must be given up to take on new ones
- Identify, trend, and improve the performance of management job processes
- Leverage the impact that cognitive ergonomics has on job performance

greatsystems.com

Do you really want to accelerate your pursuit of kaizen and operational excellence? If so, you must eliminate the non-value added time investments you currently make.

To accomplish this goal, you must change your job design approaches - your organizational ergonomics, if you will. You must find time for improvement in order to improve.

Keep improving! - **Kevin McManus,** Chief Excellence Officer and Systems Guy, **Great Systems**

About the author

As Chief Excellence Officer of Great Systems LLC, Kevin McManus provides virtual coaching and content to help people use proven best practices to enhance and optimize their daily work systems.

Over forty years of work experience in roles such as Industrial Engineer, Training Manager, Production Manager, Plant Manager, and Director of Quality give Kevin a 'real life work' perspective relative to daily work process optimization, work team engagement and empowerment, and sustainable operational excellence.

As a contract trainer for the TapRooT® root cause analysis process, Kevin has taught over 450 courses and further enhanced his ability to help leaders proactively minimize risk, reduce errors, and improve reliability. Kevin holds an undergraduate degree in Industrial Engineering and an MBA. He served as a national Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence Award Examiner for twenty years, including a three-year term on the national Judge's Panel.

Kevin has authored the monthly performance improvement column for Industrial and Systems Engineer magazine for over 20 years, is an Institute of Industrial and Systems Engineering Fellow and has been a member of IISE for over forty years. His newest book, "Different Company – How the Best Build Great Organizations", will be published in late 2025."

If you would like more information about the improvement tools and systems I have to offer, please send me an e-mail at **kevin@greatsystems.com.**

LIKE Great Systems on Facebook

CONNECT with me on LinkedIn

CHECK OUT my Amazon.com Author Page

FOLLOW me on Twitter: @greatsystems

LISTEN to my 'Real Life Work' podcast

WATCH over 70 continuous improvement videos on my Great Systems YouTube channel

LEARN MORE from my 'Best Practice Work System Downloads

"The first step on the road to high performance begins with a choice."

Kevin McManus, Great Systems!

Greatsystems.com

"Simple systems, great results!"

"The first step on the road to high performance begins with a choice."

More Great Improvement Books by Kevin McManus!

Pursuing Process Excellence

- 150 pages of ideas and examples that will help you accelerate and sustain your process improvement efforts
- Over 25 examples of 'best practice' assessment tools that leaders can use to encourage and support high performance work
- 12 team exercises that can be used to begin applying each concept as it is learned

Vital Signs Measurement

- 128 pages of ideas and examples to help you make your existing measurement systems more meaningful
- Over 30 examples of 'best practice' measurement tools and techniques that leaders can use to promote high performance work
- 14 team exercises that can be used to begin applying key concepts as they are learned

Error Proof

- 162 pages of strategies and dialogue questions to help you stop daily goofs for good
- Over 100 proven best practices that you can use to help error proof your key work processes
- Can be paired with the 100 page workshop workbook that contains 13 team exercises to help you begin applying key ideas

Facilitating and Leading Teams

- 182 pages of ideas, tools, and examples to help you improve work team, project team, and focus team effectiveness
- 10 assessments that will help you identify areas of strength and weakness relative to work and project team support
- Over 20 team exercises that will help you optimize your use of teams and improve meeting effectiveness, while also practicing your facilitation skills

How to Develop a High Performance Work Culture

- 162 pages of ideas and examples to help you begin changing your existing work systems so that they are less likely to hold back your culture change and performance improvement efforts
- Over 30 examples of tools ad techniques that are used by high performance organizations to help shape their work cultures
- 14 team exercises to help you create work systems that support and encourage a high performance work culture

kevin@greatsystems.com
206.226.8913

www.greatsystems.com

Greatsystems.com