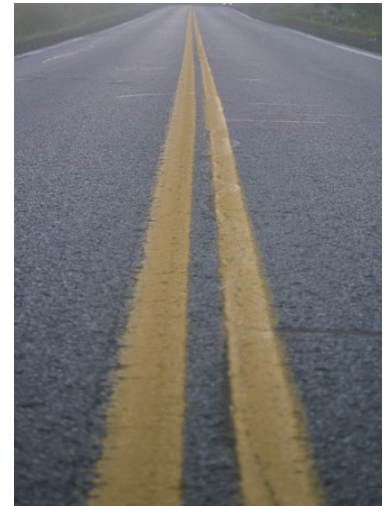


Fake Work – the Road to Nowhere

Suppose you are building a road on a mountainside leading to the site for your new cabin. You have worked for months clearing sagebrush and aspen trees. You've moved rocks and filled in roadbed through the exhausting heat, the raging downpours, and even early snow. You've pushed forward, based on your best understanding of the surveyor's plans. The road winds over a dusty hill, cuts through the trees, moves along a rocky ridge, and then – you find yourself at the end of the road, looking down from the edge of a cliff.



Fake work looks and feels like that. The building of the road was purposeful. Your effort was admirable. The blood, sweat, and tears you poured into the project were real and your commitment was profound. **However, none of that really matters!** You are still left with a road to nowhere.

A lot of people – too many in fact – confess to dedicating weekends and long nights to a project, proposal, or presentation that ended up being canceled, ignored, or dismissed – essentially roads to nowhere. Too many of us know the feeling of getting close, of almost understanding, of just being off track a little bit. And that is the road to fake work – work that is not quite real and, at the end of long days, weeks, months, or even years, just seems to drop off a cliff.

What Is Real Work, and What Is Fake Work?

What is work? It seems crazy to even ask that question. Everyone seems to know what work is. It's what we do at least five days a week, as much as fifty or more weeks out of the year. We spend more than half our lives and a vast percentage of our waking hours going to work, being at work, leaving work, and thinking about work—even when we're not at work! What we sometimes miss, when we think about the definition of work, is outcomes.

Fake work is what happens when people lose sight of their personal or company's goals – whether it's increasing sales, opening new offices, or designing new products – and what, amid all the work being done, they're actually doing to achieve those goals. The result of fake work – which drains both the individual and the company – is meaningless paperwork, time-wasting meetings, empty training initiatives, or countless other activities that do nothing to move us toward our objectives, either as individuals or as companies.

Real work, in our terms, is work that is critical and aligned to the key goals and strategies of a company – any company: family, school, church, non-profit company, government agency, company, or large corporation. It is work that is essential for the short and long-term survival of a company.

And fake work? Work that is not real work is fake work, which is effort under the illusion of value – sometimes known, sometimes unknown. **Fake work is work that is not targeting or aligned with the strategies and goals of the company.**

From the book *Fake Work: Why People Are Working Harder Than Ever but Accomplishing Less, and How to Fix the Problem* by Duncan Worldwide associates Brent D. Peterson and Gaylan W. Nielson.