

An Overview of The Work Itself Process

The Work Itself Process is a two-day roll-up-your-sleeves work session designed to help participants explicitly align their work activities to organizational strategies.

The key to a successful work session is to remember that participation is not a retreat from the daily realities of work. Instead, it's an opportunity to dig deeper into the realities of work and to develop a realistic work plan directly linked to strategies.



Following is a short description of each of the steps of **The Work Itself Process**.

Step 1: Capturing What I Do at Work

Objective: *Identify, categorize, and analyze how you spend your time at work.*

Approach: This step gives team members a chance to discover how they spend their time. After completing this step, team members have a specific, concrete understanding of the activities they typically perform in a week, and this information provides a foundation for understanding the organizations strategic goals and how they relate to the work they currently do.

Step 2: Relating Our Tasks to Strategy

Objective: Understand your organization's strategic goals and begin to connect your daily work tasks to the strategic goals.

Approach: Organizational vision and mission are usually executed through long- and short-term strategies. This step helps team members establish a clear relationship between organizational strategy and their work tasks. This process is an opportunity for team members to see the difference between what they are doing and what they should be doing to support the organization's strategic goals.



Step 3: Identifying Critical Work Tasks

Objective: Identify the critical work tasks that will allow you to make the greatest contribution to accomplishing your organization's strategic goals.

Approach: With organization's strategic goals in mind, each team member determines which critical work tasks must be completed in the coming three months. Basically, the team members are asked to respond to the following questions: "What work must I accomplish during three months to keep my boss, fellow employees, customers, and other organizational members happy? What must I do to make sure that I feel personal growth and satisfaction? What is the strategic relevance of each of these tasks?"

Step 4: Establishing Priorities and Aligning Tasks

Objective: Validate your critical work tasks and their relationship to your organization's strategic goals with input from your team.

Approach: This is an important activity, where the individual solicits input from teammates to verify that the selected tasks are indeed the most important in terms of team priorities and organizational strategy.

Step 5: Assessing Individual Effectiveness

Objective: Discover your strengths, your needs for help, the resources available to you, and potential obstacles. The team gives help to each individual team member to help them successfully complete their six critical work tasks.



Approach: During this step, team members take a detailed look at how well-equipped they are to accomplish their prioritized critical work tasks. The process requires both self-analysis—where each team member identifies strengths, needs, resources, and obstacles—as well as feedback from the team to each individual. The activities completed here are the core of *The Work Itself*. Based on the interactions that occur during this step, team members will develop attitudes and ideas that will drive the creation and execution of detailed work plans.

Step 6: Reporting Our Results

Objective: Summarize your work and acknowledge the accomplishments of the team.

Approach: This activity gives the team an opportunity to recognize their accomplishments and ensure they are prepared to create detailed work plans. By summarizing the work they have done, the team ensures they have covered all important aspects of *The Work Itself* process and lays the groundwork for the development and implementation of their work plans.

Step 7: Developing Your Individual Work Plan

Objective: Commit to a realistic work plan that allows you to accomplish your critical work tasks and contribute to your organization's strategic goals.

Approach: Here, the team members translate the insights and discoveries of the first six steps of the process into specific actions. Each participant creates a work plan that

specifies short- and long-term steps for accomplishing his or her most important critical work tasks.

Step 8: Solidifying Our Commitments

Objective: Commit to implementing your work plan and participating in the follow-up steps.

Approach: During the final step of this work session, the team acknowledges that the work session is only the first step in aligning their work to the organization's strategic goals. They review their commitments and agreements and celebrate the completion of this work session.

Step 9: Following Up at Six Weeks

Objective: Report your progress and identify any required modifications to your work plan.

Approach: Six weeks after the initial work session, the team should reconvene for a follow-up session. During the follow-up steps, the participants assess the execution of their work plans. By making any necessary course corrections and recommitting to their work, they increase the likelihood that they will complete their critical work tasks.



Step 10: Following Up at Three Months

Objective: Report your progress and identify any required modifications to your plan.

Approach: Three months after the initial work session, the team should reconvene for a follow-up session. During the follow-up steps, the participants assess the execution of their action plans. By making any necessary course corrections, recommitting to their work, and reviewing their personal feedback, they increase the likelihood that they will complete their critical work tasks.

The Work Itself is a perfect companion to Duncan Worldwide's **Change-Friendly**[®] approach to performance improvement and our **Culture Alignment Profile**[®] for assessing an organization's effectiveness.

All material related to The Work Itself process is derived from the copyrighted works of The Work Itself Group. Duncan Worldwide is an authorized and licensed strategic partner of The Work Itself Group.