

THE 1990'S IMPERATIVE:

Solving the Productivity Puzzle

BY RICHARD PEARSON

Manufacturing jobs in Hong Kong, as in Canada, are rapidly disappearing, radically transforming the economic landscape. In their place, service, administrative or "knowledge" jobs are proliferating. This shift is changing how we live and work.

Companies around the world have rediscovered "quality" as a solution to the productivity challenge. We can measure quality - but how can we measure the productivity of knowledge workers?

In a communication-heavy world of paperwork, computers, faxes and phone calls, frenzied activity does not necessarily equal productivity.

In this series of articles we will explore the Productivity Puzzle and look at ways to improve your effectiveness, how to maintain a more balanced life, and how teams can work "smarter".

Are You *Efficient or Effective*?

People say that Hong Kong is very efficient. Anyone who has had their plate taken away in a restaurant before their meal is finished will understand that efficiency does not always equal quality in terms of service. It is like the gardener who cuts the lawn quickly, but in the process mows down all the flowerbeds in his path.

Being efficient simply is not enough in today's competitive and continually changing workplace. It's up to you to make sure your working style is effective...meaning you get the right things done first.

Take this quiz to determine whether your working style leans more towards "efficient" or "effective".

- YES NO When the mail arrives, do you look through it immediately to make sure you aren't missing something that needs action?
- YES NO When a fax crosses your desk, do you read it right away?
- YES NO When someone asks for your help with something, do you pride yourself on being able to respond immediately?
- YES NO Do you judge how successful your day was by coming how many items are crossed off your "to do" list without considering their relative importance?
- YES NO Do you often get to the end of the day and find you haven't made "an appointment with yourself" - a solid period of uninterrupted time?
- YES NO Do you try to respond to phone messages immediately, even if it interrupts something else?
- YES NO Do you find that some days you don't even look at your "to do" list until several hours into the work day?

HOW DO YOU RATE?

Give yourself two points for each Yes answer and one point for each No.

12-14 POINTS :

Stop reacting and start managing your priorities! You may put too much emphasis on responding quickly, rather than assessing which tasks are the most important. Don't mistake "urgent" for "important"!

9-11 POINTS :

Resist the temptation to react to interruptions, whether it's a fax, mail, phone message or co-worker with a question. If you aren't getting the important tasks done, you won't win any points for responding quickly to less important demands on your time.

7-8 POINTS :

Congratulations! You probably know how to identify and manage your priorities. This helps you focus your energies most productively. Remember to prioritize every task, so you can determine which ones should demand your attention first.

Almost every job requires us to react...to a senior manager, problems or even a crisis. It's up to you to discern what's "important" versus what's "urgent". By focusing your energy on important tasks, you control how you react in the workplace and enjoy higher productivity and job satisfaction.

Richard Pearson is Managing Director of Priority Management (HK) Limited, the Hong Kong franchise of Vancouver-based Priority Management International Management Development and Training Firm with over 300 offices worldwide.