



“Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.” *Colin Powell*



What’s happened to our personal grooming?

I’ve been fascinated over our extended lockdown by how our standards of personal presentation have shifted. In my Zoom calls, gone are ties, suit jackets for men, and even women. Instead, I’m seeing clients in hoodies with dogs by their sides, in t-shirts with cats on their laps, and in puffer jackets sitting out on their back deck, birds chirping noisily. These are not young IT guys or hipster marketing girls, but senior executives, board directors, captains of industry. Beards are proliferating, and grey hair is growing out.

A consulting colleague told me last year that in Germany, sales of business attire (mens suits, shirts, ties and dress shoes) had declined 80% over 10 years. I was already seeing this trend in Australia: I’ve never happily worn a tie, but I’ve almost never worn one in the last couple of years, and very few of my many clients do any more.

Lockdown has, therefore, accelerated a trend that was already happening. That is, a shift towards a more natural look, without the ‘public face’ being nearly so important. Admittedly, the inability to get haircuts has created some startlingly wild hair styles and I’m sure my (longer) grey hair is much more visible than it was. But, honestly, who cares? Will I go back to my ‘old’ standards once we’re back face-to-face, or will I stay in jeans and a casual shirt, or a roll-neck?

Question: What is the benefit of maintaining high standards of personal appearance even in digital environments?

Radical focus through divestment

I’ve long been a car guy. I was the teenager who had posters of E-Type Jaguars and Aston Martins on his bedroom wall (other boys had Samantha Fox or The Mighty Hawks). At the age of 5, according to my mother, I could name every car on the road. Admittedly, in 1970, 80% of cars were all 10 models, compared to today where 50 manufacturers sell cars here.

But, last month, news emerged from Volkswagen that it’s considering divesting its ‘hobby brands’. We’re talking the very highest end: [Bugatti is being sold](#) to a Croatian group, Rimac, that has substantial electric powertrain expertise. Seat is being de-merged, and also on the list may be Lamborghini and Bentley. Why are they doing this?

It’s a move to ensure all resources are devoted to fund three massive investment programmes that will drive (sorry couldn’t resist the pun) the future of motoring – electrification, digitalisation and autonomous driving. VW is looking hard at Tesla, which has leading technology in all three areas, and is future-proofing itself rapidly, aiming for 1.5 million electric cars by 2025 (from zero today).

Question: What ‘crown jewels’ would you consider divesting to regain focus?

Doing great work every day

Yesterday, I spoke with three people who were absolutely passionate about their work. They exuded energy, possessed tremendous optimism, and had an utterly realistic view of COVID’s positive and negative impacts. All of them are CEOs I’m about to start projects with, and all of them deliver some form of public value. One’s involved in biotechnology, one in sport, and one in psychological services. Now, why is that worthy of note? Well, have you ever found yourself doing work that is under-stimulating or not rewarding and then, asking yourself, “How did I get here?”

If you have, I recommend checking out one of my self-help book faves, [“Do More Great Work” by Michael Bungay Stanier](#). He differentiates ‘bad work’ (meetings or tasks that are a waste of time and serve no purpose), ‘good work’ (mundane but necessary) and, the subject of his book, ‘great work’ (meaningful work that inspires, stretches, and provokes).

He accepts that not all work is ‘great’, but he challenges us to NOT accept ‘bad work’. Even if you’re not self-employed, he argues you can locate a sweet spot between what you want to do and what your organisation wants you to do. In my travels in organisations, I notice an appetite for much greater self-determination (and not just at senior levels), and I use that desire to challenge my clients to tap into their inner courage to proactively design their best work, not let a system or bureaucracy do it for them.

Question: What can you alter so ‘bad work’ almost disappears and ‘good work’ turns into ‘great work’?

As always, please send me your feedback by email to ww@workwell.com.au. What topics or questions would you like me to write about in the future? Let me know!

Have a wonderful weekend, all.

Andrew



[Unsubscribe](#)