

Chapter Eight - Individual Frameworks

The Power of the 2 x 2 Matrix: Using 2 x 2 Thinking to Solve Business Problems and Make Better Decisions

by Alex Lowy and Phil Hood

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Chapter Eight: Individual Frameworks

OVERVIEW

Personal Awareness and Style Frameworks

Johari Window

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Learning Styles Inventory

I'm OK, You're OK: The Four Life Positions Conflict Mode

Professional Effectiveness Frameworks

Social Styles

Getting It Right

Leadership Coaching

Career Transitioning

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Prisoner's Dilemma

Urgency and Importance

Influence and Concern

The business importance of individuals is growing as work becomes increasingly knowledge based. Although organizations and markets still determine how work is organized, individuals are the key limiting or success factor more than ever before. This is equally true on the production side of the equation, where design, innovation, and service have become the provinces of critical differentiation, and the consumption side, where active buyers filter an ever-increasing amount of information to communicate preferences and make choices.

The widespread use of computers and communications tools is enhancing the effectiveness of individual workers as it blurs the distinction between roles. Productive work can be done anywhere at anytime, in a factory, an office, or, in many cases, one's kitchen, driving new independence and personal flexibility. In some important ways, we have cycled back to a preindustrial state of affairs, as increasing numbers of us choose to work outside large, formal businesses, performing a variety of critical value-adding tasks along the way. The new information generalist has arrived, challenged to juggle, optimize, and find personal meaning in a world of limitless variety.

The central experience of individuals today is one of being inundated with options and information. The remarkable improvements brought about by information technology are accompanied by a need to shape and manage the information and opportunities in our lives. Figure 8.1 depicts the archetypal dilemma of effectiveness (contributions made) versus attaining personal satisfaction (needs met). Human potential experts like Frederick Herzberg, Steven Covey, and Michael Macoby tell us that we perform best when work is meaningful and challenging. Throughout most of the history of human work, we have been driven by necessity and the need for physical well-being and survival. For some keen observers, the postindustrial era represents a marked shift away from the fight to survive to a crisis of making choices and finding meaning.

The Archetypal Individual Dilemma

Core Question: How can I increase my personal effectiveness?

Key Issue: Fit—matching personal attributes like style, strengths, and interests with context and demand



Figure 8.1: The Archetypal Individual Dilemma

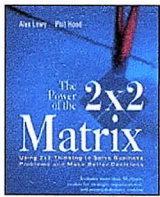
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HISTORY OF INDIVIDUAL WORK: THE DANCE BETWEEN SPECIALIZATION AND GENERALIZATION

The history of work can be understood as the story of leverage and control. Sometimes these two forces are aligned. Through most of history, this has not been the case.

Leverage is the ratio of output to input. Knowledge, technology, and organization have contributed to ever-increasing degrees of human leverage. For a crude example, consider the productivity of someone digging with a shovel versus one operating a forklift. Even after the hourly cost of renting and operating the forklift has been calculated, productivity gain measures in the range of several orders of magnitude.

Control describes two things: the freedom to set work goals, methods, and standards, and the amount of value that returns to the worker. In the abstract, most of us would agree these are desirable, especially when applied to ourselves. Indeed, as Western society has flourished since the end of World War II, living standards (value returning to the worker) have risen due to improvements in the factors of production and the widespread adoption of a political system that values market economics and entrepreneurship (freedom to set goals and methods).

A quick walk through the history of human work sets the stage for understanding the needs of the modern worker: what's common through the ages, what's new, and what it means (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1: Evolution of Human Work

➔ [Open table as spreadsheet](#)

Era	Leverage	Control	Role	Challenge/ Success Factor
Hunter-gatherer	Low	High activity, high reward	Specialist	How? Physical strength
Agrarian	Medium	High activity, medium reward	Generalist	What? Strength and planning
Industrial	High	Low activity, low reward	Specialist	When? Dignity
Information	High	High activity, high reward	Generalist	Why? Choice and meaning

The hunter-gatherer era lasted until eight thousand years ago. Early humans were nomadic, following their food sources in a struggle to survive. We are left with the romanticized image of a primitive, tribal existence, where the basic requirements for life needed to be earned daily. The work was highly specialized, and although leverage was low, control was high. Hunter-gatherers could work when and where they chose.

The agrarian age lasted approximately ninety-seven hundred years, beginning roughly around 8000 B.C. (dates denoting the duration of eras overlap). The invention of plows and domestication of animals around 7000 B.C. signaled the beginning of work as we know it today. A farmer could extend her reach and yield beyond direct personal effort; stored knowledge grew and began to play a larger role. In comparison with the hunter-gatherers, greater leverage was achieved, and control became a reasonable expectation for many. Still, farming in the early years remained an arduous and risky undertaking, with many bad years to match the few easier, idyllic ones. As leverage grew in the later years with the introduction of better equipment, methods, and science, control dwindled. Farms grew larger, and operating costs and power issues led to concentration of ownership in fewer hands. We rate the agrarian work experience as medium in leverage, with varying degrees of control that diminished over the period.

The industrial age, lasting from the mid-1700s to the middle of the twentieth century, transformed the nature of work once again. Machine technology advanced in power and scale, creating previously unimaginable levels of work efficiency. Labor productivity in the British textile industry increased by 120 times between 1770 and 1812.^[1] According to business historian Alfred Chandler, by 1880, fully 80 percent of British workers involved in the production of goods worked in mechanized factories.^[2] With the assembly line as the model, the human worker became an extension of the machine and relegated to tasks that were subordinate, programmed, and highly repetitive. Work was once again specialized and low in control.

The information age began in the mid-1960s with the convergence of computing, telecommunications, and media, effecting the most recent great shift in human work. As the industrial period saw a dramatic redistribution of labor away from farming—from over 70 percent in the United States in 1800 to only 1.6 percent today—the information revolution has led people out of factories and traditional professions into a growing array of knowledge-based careers. In large corporations, jobs in innovation, process design, and customer service are replacing the more mechanical and maintenance-oriented jobs of the industrial model organization.

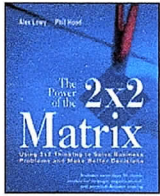
Life in the information era is more complex, but arguably a great improvement over earlier forms. Inexpensive and ubiquitous information systems level the competitive field in ways previously unimaginable. Hierarchy now competes with quality within firms, as best ideas can and often do come from anywhere. As a colleague, Betty Sproule of Hewlett Packard, observed, “Insight is not distributed hierarchically.” The brain has replaced the machine as the dominant organizational metaphor. Independent workers and small firms connect with others electronically and operate as well-integrated, intelligent nodes of business networks without needing to be owned by them. Knowledge is creating the possibility of aligning leverage and control for the common worker, who for the first time since the early agrarian period can afford the prime competitive resource: knowledge itself.

[1]P. Hawken, A. Lovins, and L. H. Lovins, *Creating the Next Industrial Revolution* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1996), p. 176.

[2]A. Chandler, Jr. *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 245–246.

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THE INDIVIDUAL IN A 2 x 2 CONTEXT

Individual frameworks fall into three categories:

- Personal awareness and style. Some of the best developed and tested 2 x 2 frameworks have been created to enhance personal understanding about style, preferences and how others perceive us. Based on well-established research and modeling from the fields of personality and social psychology, there is a wealth of instrumentation and interpretative support available.
- Professional effectiveness. A significant number of performance and awareness models address work experience directly. Leadership, inter- personal and team orientation, career management, and social style fall into this category.
- Decision making. Personal effectiveness depends on clarity and the ability to act. Frameworks in this section structure decision making in intuitively straightforward and useful ways.

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