

# Style Plus

## Ideas

# Memo to the Boss

*Here's a Path to Increased Productivity, More or Less*

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Dear Boss, When last we explored new and exciting thoughts on increasing productivity in the workplace, you might remember I'd found cutting-edge info about how employers benefit from improving employees' leisure-time satisfaction. Bottom line there was that making sure workers took quality vacations, followed by sensitive reentries into the humdrum, paid off big for management.

You were pretty impressed with the idea, as I recall. "Interesting," you said. "Get back to work now." (By the way, did we tell you how much we all enjoyed the glossy, full-color postcard you sent the staff from your vacation this summer?)

As for the research on upping productivity and creativity with daily afternoon naps? Somebody upstairs must be asleep at the wheel, boss, 'cause that memo I sent you was the last I've heard of the idea. No feedback either on my brief about those scientific findings that showed employees are happier and more productive when they have visual proximity to a natural scene—even if it's just a potted oasis near their cubicles.

This memo's about the newest best thing. Contrary to any common-sense notions you might have, the latest advancement in productivity theory recycles that old, perplexing, post-industrial conundrum that insists somehow "less is more." Instead of trying, against all odds, to sell people on such "small planet" irrationalities as less food is more food, or less money is more money, or less space is more space, this time the idea is far more realistic and promising. And, I might add, it seems totally doable: Less work is more work!

Probably I should restate that: Despite what we have been conditioned to believe in this workaholic, deadline-driven, overstressed, loaded-in-basket, need-it-yesterday world, less work actually can be more work! The approach is so right-now, so hot, so happening, that there are two new, big-publisher, hardback books touting it.

One of them is called "Doing Less and Having More: Five Easy Steps for Discovering What You Really

Want—and Getting It" (Morrow, \$22). I telephoned the author, Marcia Wieder, who is described inside the book jacket as someone who "travels the world helping people discover and achieve their dreams." (Okay, yes, in fact, she is from California. But consider for a moment how many great ideas really have come from out there! And, besides, companies such as AT&T and American Express have trusted her inside their corporate bastions to teach this very approach. She even has been on Oprah!)

Because she is a leading spokeswoman for the do-less-and-having-more philosophy, I decided it would be appropriate to ask her to explain it all in one sentence.

"In one sentence?" Wieder repeated. That did strike me as redundant, therefore flying in the face of her own theory. But who's quibbling?

She cleared her throat, then stated: "The key for doing less and having more is to actually reconnect to your passion—because when we're doing what we love, it gets done faster and easier."

Hard to argue with that, right, boss? Wieder wrote the book, she said, because "at a time when life has become so over-everything—over-complicated, over-critical, over-scheduled—many of us have lost our passion and forgotten our dreams. Life has become living from a clock and a calendar."

Without our dreams, we become mired in unrelenting reality, and "that often kills off our enthusiasm, creativity and drive," said Wieder.

What to do? People who feel trapped in the workaday whirl should spend a day, a week, a month, whatever they can, to pay attention to what matters to them, what moves them, to who it is they are passionate about being, Wieder said. "You should say to your boss, you need to go on a passion quest. Passion is the ultimate time management tool. As we clear away the clutter and start to include more things in our lives that we really are passionate about, life takes on a whole different way of living."

To make a long story short (i.e., to do less), let me just say that Wieder offers all sorts of tips about bringing passion back into work. You might say this is bottom-line passion. "The bottom line is, happy people make happy employees, and happy employees produce better results," Wieder told me to tell you. "It is management who needs



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to create an environment that enables people to bring their passion to the office."