

# 1

## FIND YOUR OWN PRODUCTIVITY BALANCE

What came first the egg or the chicken? Who cares! Both are key and interdependent. We can't have eggs without a chicken and chickens come from incubated eggs. If you think about the chicken as the producer of goods and the eggs as results, good eggs are made by healthy chickens. What is vital and yet often overlooked is the balance between the producer (you) and the product egg (the results you produce). A balance that *you* proactively manage rather than one that comes out of what's happening *to you*.

A vital part of success and productivity is taking care of the producer – you. When your needs are met, you'll be in a good place to perform at your best. If you feel safe and appreciated in the workplace, you're more likely to risk asking difficult but critical questions and are also likely to engage more. If you feel acknowledged and loved for who you are by your friends and family, you're more likely to be honest with them and you'll often go to great lengths to help. When you are truly productive, then, you can deliver results without wearing yourself down. In fact, delivering results will re-energize and sustain you.

Most people experience crunch times. Some people work through one crunch time after another until they literally burn out. The danger with spending all or most of your energy on egg production is that, at some point, you – the hen – will get tired, your wellbeing and satisfaction will suffer and you will become at risk of getting stressed out. You end up missing out on life's greatest pleasure – the joy of balance.

## Get Productive!

The following Product–Producer Balancer exercise is a quick, simple, practical and useful way to take stock of what needs your attention in the short, mid and longer term for maximal productivity that is truly sustainable. If you only focus on cranking out ‘results’, you put yourself at risk of burning out at some stage. On the other hand, if you focus solely on taking care of the producer, you might find that you’re not pleased with your results, especially if you enjoy success and achieving.

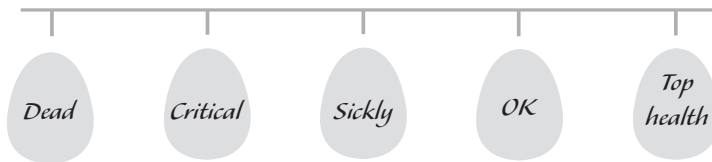
Think of your overall productivity as the sum of two numbers – producer and product. If the producer is tired or weak, it is difficult if not impossible to create a great product. Equally, if what you make is not well thought out and the producer is capable of more, your overall result will be poorer than what you’re capable of. Therefore, this exercise should help you to develop explicit awareness of how things are, pinpoint areas that may require minor or major tweaks and help you to acknowledge and celebrate your ability to keep a good balance. The exercise applies equally well in all contexts: job, career, life, relationship, role, project and so on.

### *PRODUCT–PRODUCER BALANCER EXERCISE*



## Find Your Own Productivity Balance

1. Imagine yourself as a healthy chicken that sits on a nest of wonderful, healthy eggs or a single healthy egg. The egg might be your fantastic job, healthy family, a well-conceived and executed project or an amazing partner. The healthy chicken is you in top mental, emotional, physical and spiritual form: you at your very best.
2. Use the following scale to rank the current health state of you – the chicken – and of each of your key eggs:
  - Top health** – excellent condition
  - OK** – could be improved
  - Sickly** – you know what's wrong and you know how to fix it
  - Critical** – needs attention right now or serious loss risk
  - Dead** – completely exhausted or lost



3. Assess where you – the chicken – fall along the scale, as well as each of your eggs. Do many fall towards the healthy end, or more towards the critical end?

Notes:

4. Note where the focus is right now – is it on the product or the producer?

Notes:



### Reflective Questions

- What would top health/excellent condition look like for you? How would you feel? What could you achieve?
- If you look back in time, what does the product–producer balance look like for you? Is the balance appropriate or does the producer or product suffer? What most contributes to this situation? How can you ensure this does not repeat itself?
- What is the general trend? Are you getting better, staying the same or getting worse in maintaining a healthy balance?
- Looking forward, what would you like the balance to look like? What indicators/measures of success can you establish to help you keep track?



### *FIND YOUR OWN PRODUCTIVITY BALANCE: TAKEAWAY LESSONS*

Completing this exercise should help you assess your overall productivity at the moment in a way that pays attention to your wellbeing and balance. Having worked with many achievers and people with

exceptional drive, I know from experience that being able to control and maintain good balance as producers is not easy. It is, however, possible. By examining what you pay more attention to, you can begin to create explicit awareness of effective habits and those that cause you to suffer and undermine your overall performance. A regular quick review of this exercise will certainly help you to see how you're doing. It's like a temperature gauge that lets you know if you're OK quickly.

If you find yourself lacking in good balance, you may wish to consider specific actions you could take to introduce better balance. If you find that your producer is suffering, for example, this often means paying more attention to your body, nutrition and creating rest time. Creating new habits may initially feel like you are doing more activities, but once introduced into your daily routine, these little 'producer maintainers', such as regular exercise, a short time out over a good cup of coffee or a phone call to someone you care about, can do wonders for your overall productivity. Many exercises in this book will explicitly help you identify ideas for taking care of the producer. Alternatively, you may wish to work with a qualified professional. If your producer is compromised, I do urge you to take action promptly, as a healthy producer is fundamental to your overall productivity.

If, however, you find that you are less than totally satisfied with the quality of your products (eggs), I would suggest a time-friendly review of your activities with specific exercises in this book such as the Diamond, Gold and Lead Exercise (Chapter 6) or the Goal Highlighter (Chapter 13) as a good starting point. Often what's needed is a slight refocus or minor shift that becomes obvious when you take the time to look at what is actually going on. You may also wish to work with someone else (a coach, mentor, therapist, colleague or friend) to help you think through what you hope to create. Whatever you decide, do not wait. Addressing your imbalance with action will automatically move you forward by creating a change.

## Get Productive!

Using your mind to observe, learn and ask questions as we do in this book will help you to find your own solutions for optimal productivity.

If you find yourself having perfect balance a lot, really take the time to celebrate! This is an important skill that will help ensure you remain grounded, successful and enjoy what you're doing. People who exhibit good balance help others do the same through example. Often they have specific benchmarks or references that help them know what good balance looks like from daily journals, mindful practices to tune in and self-check, regular reviews and fitness checks to name but a few. I remember a manager I once worked with who advocated good work-life balance and always left the office at 4:30 to pick up his children from school. His staff knew he believed and practised what he preached. He was also hugely successful. His behaviour demonstrated to others that success in terms of overall productivity meant good balance and he was at its centre.

Examining your overall balance sets you up for effective working and high-level personal productivity. If you work in a team or lead a team, you may wish to complete this exercise with others.