



UNLIMITED
— BY JOHN CORCORAN —

Chapter 2

Easy to Do the Right Thing

Designing for 'will do', not 'should do'

Reference: Chapter 2 — Make it easy to do the right thing

Notes before you start

This is not about building perfect processes.

This is about adjusting things to make it easier to do the right thing from a start point that is predominantly fit for purpose. You can bail on this process to do a proper 'back to the drawing board' exercise if at any point if in the exercise you've identified that you want revolution not evolution!

The diagnoses, examples and suggestions are not universal – how could they be! – so don't discount the benefit of adding your own experience and ideas!

Give yourself permission to start small. This isn't difficult but it is different. There's wisdom in practicing with the brushes before starting on the painting!

This is an exercise that supports an ongoing world of recognising how the constraints impacting your business and the human behaviours within it interact; and offering a framework whereby you can identify actions that might singly or in combination provide a successful path towards taking control of the outcomes you need.

The real benefit is not to be gained in the first successes but in the confidence to diagnose and act, watch and adjust, forever.

Take time to do these exercises in written form (hard or soft copy) and retain the exercises. Chapter 7 – Process Duality, these exercises over time tell you about the pressures that permeate your business so you can look and adjust or predict in other areas before things are going amiss



What You're About to Do

Simple is good! The simple way to think about making it easy to do the right thing, and thus achieve your aim of making sure you have 'will do' not 'should do' is to imagine making it easy to be a 7 step process:

The 7 steps to making 'will do' happen, despite all the factors that push against it

1. Design for Ease (make it easy to do the right thing practically)

→ Chapters 2, 5, 6, 7

2. Communicate (so it can be understood and applied)

→ Chapter 6

3. Reduce Load (remove decisions from the day to day)

→ Chapter 18

4. Reduce Complexity (in practice, less > easy)

→ Chapters 5, 6 + observation

5. Detect Friction (see reality as it unfolds)

→ Chapter 7, Section 3

6. Align Motivation (make 'right' desirable)

→ Chapter 10, Section 4

7. Prevent Drift (keep it rolling)

→ Chapter 6, Section 3

We've going to run a simple diagnostic exercise that helps reframe where you find yourself and identify where in that process you want to focus

You are going to:

- choose one process – (don't ignore the notes, permission to start small!) and– describe why we're looking at this process
- reframe what really matters in this process into 4 categories that will help point us towards what might be going on and how we might address it.
- reprise why you're looking at the process, through the lens of those 4 categories – we know things are not how you want them, but how do they deviate from what matters.
- identify what gets in the way as environmental pressures, complexity issues, incentive or recognition misalignment, and natural human behaviours. You are going to challenge yourself that the outcomes you're unhappy with are not the result of a lack of process or a failure to communicate expectations.
- identify and prioritise viable approaches to the kind of issues you have identified by matching them to ideas or suggestions inspired by Unlimited
- Set a clear action, a deadline, and agree how and when you will measure the outcome relative to those important outcomes from step 2



WORKSHEET

Step 1A. The Process or Issue

The outcomes that concern us

The processes or teams we're looking at to see if we can resolve that

Let's just check before we move on – is that set of outcomes you're worried about definitely the result of the process you're thinking of?

Chapter 20: "Most organisations experience most work as a flow... Variability introduced early in that flow multiplies the difficulty of everything that follows. Variability introduced later rarely travels back upstream. Alignment is most valuable/impactful early in the flow of work"

This exercise isn't designed to 'fix' everything all at once – but let's acknowledge if we're fixing something, for now, that should in fact be fixed further forward in the business.

Notes:



Step 1 B

Write down all your negativity – get it out of your head and onto the page. Everything from here is positive open mindset achieved by knowing we have left everything that concerns us here to come back to a the right moment.

What's going wrong, why is it a knotty unresolved problem to this point...

Once you're a master at this process, you'll want to describe why fixing this matter matters – because if it doesn't, maybe focus your energy on something else! But for now, permission to start small! Skip this for now if you're starting small.

Why does it matter



2. What Actually Matters

Now we need to break down the outcomes you need into a framework that we can use to assess what it is we're trying to make easy

Everything about this process goes in one of the 4 boxes until the whole activity is defined by these parameters

We're not finished till everything is in there, and when we inevitably identify something further along just come back and categorise it and move one from here.

Outcome-critical	Method/process-critical
<i>Result must be as specified</i>	<i>Consistency of method/process essential</i>
Outcomes variable-by-design	Variable-by-default
<i>Must be adaptable but from a definable 'list'</i>	<i>Must be highly adaptable but within parameters</i>



3 & 4. What's Happening and what is getting in the Way

List the 3-5 most important 'what matters' from the previous page.

(3-5 isn't a magic number, if there are only 2 that stand out, or 6 that stand out don't waste time working out which is most important, but do be selective)

Category	'top 5' Item
<i>Outcome critical</i>	<i>Clients must receive a written confirmation of receipt within 24 hours</i>

So now, what's currently happening in those areas – how is the outcome deviating from the category outcome – for example in what way are people not following an essential method or process, in what way is the outcome insufficiently adaptable.... NOT what's wrong, not a reprise of the negativity from step 1 – we've got that all on the page already, how specifically are things deviating from the 4 category requirements.

'top 5' Item	How does this deviate from its category requirement
<i>Written report on time</i>	<i>20% of reports are not on time. Predominantly they are the reports for overseas clients. These appear to peak at quarter end, but do occur through the quarter less regularly as well.</i>

Now based on the description of how things are not going the way they need to go we're going to look at how these might be the result of the 4 very common pressures that have outsized impact in businesses under constraints

We've going to use these to connect up with actions that are commonly successful vs these pressures, so your goal here is to 1) make any notes that extend the insights gained so far 2) identify the 1 pressure or factor that appears to be most impactful AND the one that appears to be easiest to address

Word of warning – there is never enough resource and there is always time pressure – if this is completely 100% unchangeable then it is a constant, and thus can't be the 'issue' or pressure that you are looking for. This exercise is not helpful if its just going to tell you to throw money at the problem! Using our example above however, if this is a seasonal or temporal (quarterly in our example) time pressure then that's a super useful environmental constraint to identify

<p>Environmental Pressures examples: time pressures, Alternative priorities, multi-tasking or interruptions, spacial/multi office or remote working considerations, working to please the wrong stakeholder</p>	<p>Complexity Many steps or many micro-decisions, inflexible or insufficiently engaging guidance, unclear instructions, high knowledge or experience requirement to get right</p>
<p>Incentives / (in)Visability Speed vs quality, limited feedback or delayed consequences, misaligned incentives</p>	<p>The Human Factor Feels like boring bureaucracy, don't understand the value or importance, embedded (wrong) habits</p>

5. What Might Help

Now we pick the actions that seem likely to help. IMPORTANT - remember, this is about adjusting things to make it easier to do the right thing from a start point that is predominantly fit for purpose. You can bail on this process to do a proper 'back to the drawing board' exercise if at any point if in the exercise you've identified that you want revolution not evolution!

You can go for the big one or the easy one! Permission to start small and see what happens!

Use the 4 category cards at the back to inspire how you're going to address these challenges and complete the table below to sense check

Item(s)	How does it currently deviate from its category requirements	What was our diagnosed key pressure or factor	What action are we going to take, and how will that help?

Sense Check: Have we identified a next action that looks likely to make it easier in practice to do the right thing relative to the deviation we're currently experiencing?



6. Your Action, Test & Measure

Standard stuff! What are you going to do, when are you going to do it by, how are you going to measure whether its been successful?



7. Follow up

What you've just done and how to take it further.

You've just completed a simplified exercise to diagnose and improve an existing process, but has it inspired you with ideas or opportunities elsewhere or for next steps?

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What other opportunities strike you?



Category cards: Environmental pressures

Chapter 5-7 are your go to.

Key themes:

under any kind of environmental stress

- Combining rules and principles-based work fails.
- Moving regularly between tasks is a recipe for not nailing any of them
- Being 'finished' fights for priority with getting it done correctly if you aren't 100% clear of the expectations

Are the right people smashing out the core rules based work, focusing on one activity done right, while the right people undertake the principles based work or glue together those core functions? Can each clearly see what success looks like for their role and why its important?

Can you segment the work, change the flow or otherwise rebuild to get closer to that ideal?

Decision making and uncertainty slows us down or gets things wrong (vs time pressure):

- Find your hidden decision trees. Remove 'judgement' and replace with structure
- Can you create pre-authorized decisions to allow the team to move more effectively in 80% of the circumstances?

Simple examples:

Daily priority times: we do task A as a group, brilliantly, between 10 & 11 every morning

Guidance presented as decision trees: permission to act as guided, permission to escalate if not covered.

Build the guidance/rules into the process – anything from transitioning from free text to drop down menus to sellotaping the 'must do's' to the computer monitor!

Be able to identify and reward 'good' – this may not be an incentive mismatch issue, but that doesn't mean you can't push back against environmental factors with recognition and targeted incentives.

Simplify – if you can't train the kind of people you will be hiring on the process or the module in a day it may be too complicated for this environment

Things to avoid

Avoid the information deficit trap – are you arranged as you are simply through an abundance of caution and this is ending up causing issues with boredom and lack of adherence to a process that is perceived to be overkill? Your abundance of caution isn't helping!



Category cards: Complexity

Chapter 5-7 and 18 are where you want to focus.

Key themes:

under any kind of complexity stress

- Mixing rules and principles creates confusion and inconsistency
- Judgement is often applied without context or focus on the key outcome
- Activity drifts rapidly away from 'right'
- Many activities are undertaken without a clear idea of the value or purpose of the activity
- Situations tend towards people having to 'work out what to do', differences and outliers are perceived ahead of similarities and correlations – too many things become unpredictable, without parameters or verification.

Can you divide to conquer, or 'more is less' – 1 complex process that fails to deal with all the situations is beaten hands down by 3 simple processes to manage 90% of the situations – with 1 remaining complex process that only has to handle 10% of the input – can you find the points at which you can segment your activities?

Can you segment the work, change the flow or otherwise rebuild in a way that focuses on what you can communicate with ease?

Complex processes under constraint tend towards boom or bust, work is focused on being finished (rather than right) or stalls to snails pace due to uncertainty

- Find your key dividers – separate complex work into simple differentiators followed by simple work; don't fear having more processes – having fewer was an unsustainable illusion.
- Separate out rules based work and how you arrange it, from principles based work and how you arrange that.
- Focus on the transitions – the point of maximum potential for failure are the transitions between people and teams
- Ensure you are embedding the information required to prevent drift

Simple examples:

Not a process to tell me 'how to store and stack any fruit', a process to tell me how to differentiate apples from oranges from pears from everything else, and then a super simple process to store and stack the apples, the oranges and the pears, and a process for who to tell when some raspberries (or are they strawberries? Doesn't matter...) turn up.

Focus your communication and information gathering on the transitions – When you've finished pass it to the green team becomes 'when x, y and z are true, and a, b and c complete' pass it to the green team.

Recognise and reward adherence to the process including the exceptions process.

Pre-authorized pre decisions: encourage people to remain in line by making certain pinch points simple to transition through with a predefined review, decision and action protocol.

Things to avoid

Avoid relying on training to solve issues with a high complexity factor – the drift is too great



Category cards: Incentives / (in)Visibility

Chapter 7, 10, Section 3 – MI & Audit are really helpful here

Key themes:

under any kind of incentive or (in)visibility stress

- Behaviour follows what is seen, measured and recognised - not what is intended
- Activity and outcomes become disconnected - people optimise for what is visible
- What goes unchallenged becomes acceptable (drift via silence)
- Information exists but is not connected to decisions - visibility without impact; feedback loops are too slow or too distant to influence behaviour

What behaviour is currently being reinforced (intentionally or not) by your firm communications, your leadership communications, or simply by what is visible and perceived in and amongst the team? Do you have the information you need to identify drift and correct matters? Do your processes allow for that information to be collected and be instructive? Is “good” visible to you and across the team?

We know that you get what you reward or recognise, so are we set up to make it easy for us to do the right thing - easy for us to identify, reward and recognise good?

- Align recognition and reward with the behaviour you actually want
- Focus on the information produced by the process, not just the output
- Ensure visibility is early enough to act, not just to observe; then act
- Be curious, promote process that support transparency to surface what isn't being said or seen

Simple examples:

Get the team's KPIs right, believing in them yourself, and championing those who are smashing them. If you wouldn't feel comfortable paying the firm's annual bonuses based entirely on performance vs KPIs – the KPIs aren't directing people to do what you want them doing!

Use your database to its full potential: if one field that progresses from 'open/closed', to 'open/closed date' to 'open JohnC / closed date', can generate significant additional data and accountability at not appreciable additional difficulty what can you do across a process.

Empower your managers to focus team time on communicating how the team and what they are being asked to do fits in the firm's vision.

Use your platform to talk about the right things and actively avoid praising or recognising indiscriminately.

Things to avoid

Don't assume that you must reward or incentivise activity or sales without a quality or process-adherence element. Don't place one-dimensional outputs at the heart of your culture where you could recognise those people and groups that do things the right way and get the right outcomes.



Category cards: The Human Factor

Chapter 1, 3, 6, 10, Section 4

Key themes:

under any kind of Human Factor stress

- Avoiding 'pain' > achieving good.
- Principles are reinterpreted into personal "rules of thumb" that feel manageable but are wrong
- Activity becomes mechanical — effort is applied without connection to purpose
- Habits override intention — people default to what feels normal, not what is right

People don't ignore instructions maliciously - they reinterpret them so they can cope

Do your people understand what good looks like, why it matters, and when they are expected to apply judgement vs follow process? Or are they creating their own version of "what seems right" based on what they see around them?

Focus your process information on the transitions. 90% of tasks that took the longest had x and y complete with z outstanding and preventing progress.

Simple examples:

Things to avoid

Don't confuse poor process design with poor intent – reinterpretation is usually the result of unclear guidance, not unwillingness.

