

Do Less, not More

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5 Questions

1. Empirical evidence?
2. Why (causal mechanisms, ie benefits)?
3. What required?
4. How do it, practically?
5. Downsides?

Hypothesis

- All else equal, people who do less, not more, are more likely to achieve extraordinary results than those who do not
- do less: do a few things, and strive to excel in them
- extraordinary results: top 10% in domain or achieved a remarkable result in non-defined domain
- Plausible alternative: People who do multiple things (hedge) do better

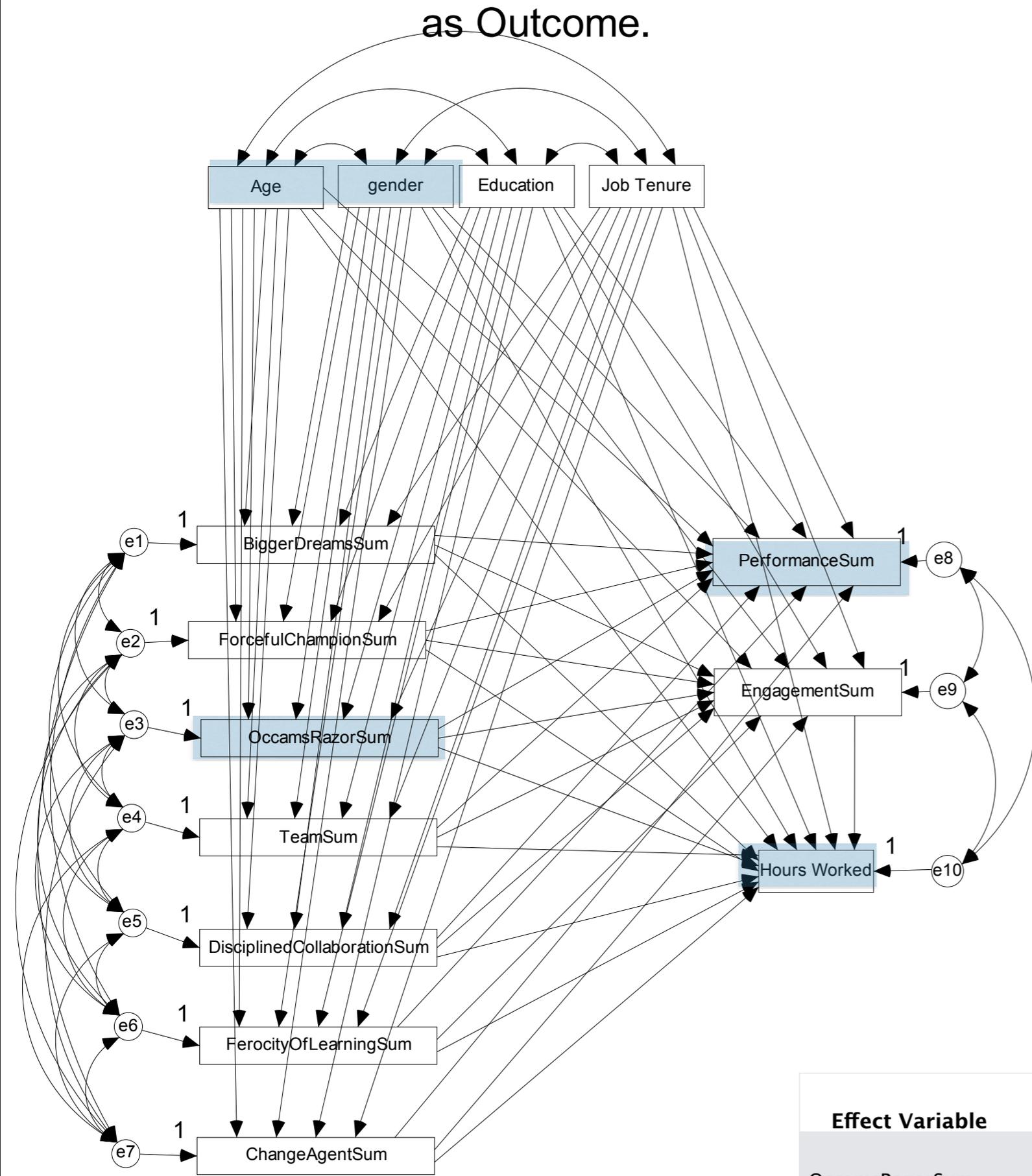
Empirical Evidence

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.367	.024		15.186	.000		
	AgeInYears	.000	.000	-.012	-.802	.423	.845	1.183
	gender	-.031	.005	-.084	-6.120	.000	.977	1.024
	JobTenureInYears	.004	.001	.063	4.266	.000	.850	1.176
	EducationInYears	.012	.001	.132	9.595	.000	.968	1.033
	HoursWorkedPerWeek	.005	.000	.234	16.876	.000	.961	1.040
2	(Constant)	-.084	.013		-6.284	.000		
	AgeInYears	5.84E-006	.000	.000	.045	.964	.842	1.188
	gender	-.006	.003	-.015	-2.160	.031	.965	1.037
	JobTenureInYears	.003	.000	.056	7.490	.000	.843	1.187
	EducationInYears	.002	.001	.027	3.857	.000	.940	1.063
	HoursWorkedPerWeek	.001	.000	.047	6.487	.000	.886	1.128
	BiggerDreamsSum	.239	.011	.241	20.871	.000	.353	2.831
	OccamsRazorSum	.252	.010	.230	24.946	.000	.554	1.805
	ForcefulChampionSum	.230	.016	.202	14.727	.000	.250	3.998
	TeamSum	.036	.015	.033	2.341	.019	.234	4.272
	Disciplined							
	CollaborationSum	.128	.017	.092	7.397	.000	.307	3.254
	FerocityOfLearningSum	.153	.014	.144	11.194	.000	.286	3.497
ChangeAgentSum	.075	.016	.061	4.732	.000	.280	3.570	

a. Dependent Variable: PerformanceSum

Figure 1. Fully Connected Model with Hours Worked as Outcome.



Effect Variable		Cause Variable	Direct	C. R.	(si gnific
OccamsRazorSum	<-	AgeInYears	0.096	4.439	<.001
OccamsRazorSum	<-	gender	-0.067	-3.071	0.002

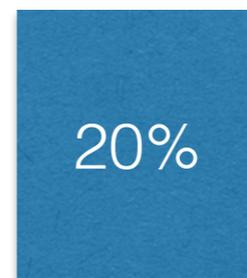
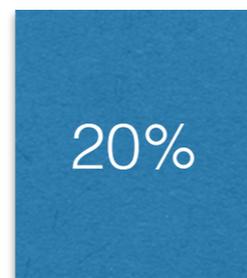
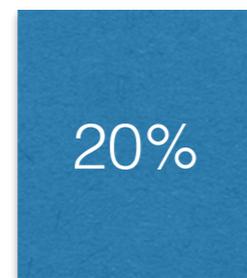
Trap: Spreading too thin

tasks

1



5



Why output of 1 > output of 5?

Trap: Complexity

- # steps to get work done
- # check-points
- # sign-offs required
- # people on board
- # layers in org chart
- # departments
- # sales offices
- # bureaucrats

- # goals
- # strategies
- # priorities
- # tasks
- # KPIs

Volume

Price

#new accounts

% new products

% small accounts

Why beneficial?

Do Less

All-in

Choice Risk Up

Execution Risk Down

Concentrate

Simplify

Execution

>

Do More

Hedge

Choice Risk Down

Execution Risk Up

Spread-too-thin

Complexity

Choice

What is required for a do-less approach to succeed?

1. Choose fewest things possible

- Occam's Razor

2. Choose really, really well

- Otherwise huge risk

3. Absolutely master those few things

- Otherwise hedging better; otherwise execution risk

Jiro Dreams of Sushi

Jiro the person

hard working
life commitment
disciplined
obsessed
into details
mega-perfectionist

+

Do-less scope

one restaurant
very small (12)
only sushi
few pieces (15-20)
only best fish
best rice

= massive, life-long dedication to exceptional

Jiro Doesn't Dream of Sushi...

Jiro the person

hard working
life commitment
disciplined
obsessed
into details
mega-perfectionist

+

Do-more scope

10 restaurants
all large
Japan, Paris, Vegas....
sushi+tapas+French
standard menu
ok ingredients

**= Food empire, a la Gordon Ramsey
(but probably not truly best in anything)**

Joe Bloke Dreams of Sushi

Joe the potato couch

Get's in at 10am...

fun job

relaxes

hands-off

+

Do less scope

one restaurant

very small (12)

only sushi

few pieces (15-20)

= mediocre

Downsides to do-less approach

- Sometimes Hedging more beneficial than focus (choice risk is bigger than execution risk)
- Specialization gone too far (creates collaboration problem)
- Tunnel vision, becomes rigid (no change)

What's preventing people from doing less (focusing and simplifying)?

1. Spreading too thin	1,047	23%
2. Too much work	595	13%
3. Complexity	502	11%
4. Upper Management/Organization	356	8%
5. Personal Problem (e.g. attention)	272	6%
6. Poor Prioritization	233	5%
7. Distractions through office layout	212	5%
8. Interruptions by other people	209	5%

Question: What key factors make it difficult for you to focus and simplify your work?

**How become better at “doing less, not more”
(focusing and simplifying)?**

1. Subtract

An army major conducted an experiment in a small town named Kufa. The major had analyzed videotapes of riots and had found that violence was often preceded by a crowd of Iraqis gathering in a plaza and, over the course of hours, growing in size. Food vendors would show up, as well as spectators. Then, someone would throw a rock or a bottle.

When the major met with Kufa's mayor, he made an odd request: Could they keep food vendors out of the plazas? Sure, the mayor said. A few weeks later, a small crowd gathered near the Great Mosque of Kufa. It grew in size. Some people started chanting angry slogans. At dusk, the crowd started getting restless and hungry. People looked for the kebab sellers normally filling the plaza, but there were none to be found. The spectators left. The chanters became dispirited. By 8 p.m., everyone was gone.

"Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away."

Antoine Saint-Exupery

2. Force the To-Do List

Divide your to-do-list into “must have’s” and “nice to have’s” and ditch the nice part

Ask a colleague play devil’s advocate to push you to cut things

Create a stop-doing list

Ask your boss to rank the top 3 priorities in your work

3. Learn to say NO

- **Never**
- **Postpone (Jobs did)**
- **Delegate**
- **Push back against boss**

4. Obliterate distractions & interruptions

- Force yourself off electronics**
- Hide in your cubicle**
- Politely say “get lost”**
- Cut down on hallway chit-chat**

Exercise

Building Effective Habits

5 Areas: Do Less

- **Do a few things only.** List max 3 priorities, only do must have's, say no.
- **Dedicate time and energy to those things.** Time spent on them, energy spent on them, emotional investment, etc.
- **Simplify work.** Cut out steps, content, features, etc.
- **Simplify communication.** Shorten e-mails, reduce slides in preso, get to the point in chatting, etc.
- **Avoid distractions.** Turn off phone in meetings, work in a quiet place, skip a seminar, etc.

Examples

Today's Mission

Today, **say no** to one activity (work or otherwise) that you would enjoy doing and that will take at least one hour, then instead use that our to work on your key priority

Over the next two days, List and rank your top 6 priorities. Then cross out the bottom three. Make a plan to spend at least 50% of your time on the **top 3 priorities**.

Download the “self-control” app, enter your most **distracting websites**, find 90 minutes of one chunk over the next two days, turn it on, and work exclusively on your top priority.