

"It's time to join Josh Allan Dykstra's work revolution and change the future of employment experiences. *Igniting the Invisible Tribe* will empower, inform, and motivate you to leverage the unseen forces that create social and business affinity. Bravo, Josh. Now buy this book!"

— Joseph Michelli, Ph.D.

New York Times #1 Bestselling Author of *The Zappos Experience* & *The Starbucks Experience*



IGNITING
the
INVISIBLE
TRIBE

DESIGNING AN ORGANIZATION
THAT DOESN'T SUCK

JOSH ALLAN DYKSTRA

IGNITING THE INVISIBLE TRIBE

Designing An Organization That Doesn't Suck

SAMPLE

Josh Allan Dykstra

PRAISE

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Tribes are better for Josh’s work.”

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“The rules of organizational life have changed dramatically and Josh provides a new and reliable map of the territory. Prepare to change. His strategies for thriving—not just surviving—will illuminate the path forward for all of us!”

— Michael W. Morrison, Ph.D.

Founder of the University of Toyota and author of *The Other Side of the Card*

“Igniting the Invisible Tribe is a call to recognize the terrific advantages of ‘what will be’ in the emerging 21st century workplace. Josh’s well-honed perspective turns traditional workforce planning on its ear while clearly offering new ways to collaboratively reach a better tomorrow. The book is forcefully explicit, an easy but provocative reading experience and loaded with ideas all generations in the workforce should hear.”

— Carleen MacKay

Director of Mature Workforce Initiatives for Career Partners International and author or co-author of 4 books about and for the Boomer Workforce



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A stylized white flame logo with three main upward-pointing tongues of fire. The word "NEW" is written in a bold, blocky, sans-serif font across the middle of the flame's base.

NEW
ANSWERS

This book is a manifesto for a new kind of business.

I don't know your story, but I suspect that your life, like mine, is incredibly imbalanced. If you are like me, we spend the vast majority of our time and energy on one thing:

Work.

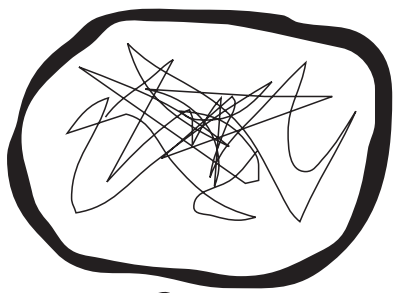
I spend more time working than I spend on anything else.

Work occupies me more than my family, more than my hobbies, more than relaxing. It absorbs most of my thoughts and the vast majority of my energy.

Isn't it only right, then, that my "place of business" not suck?

This section is about discovering new answers to some very old questions.

IS
'THIS'
ALL LIFE
IS
ABOUT?



W*hat was I going to do?*

I had been fired before, but this time was different.

The time of the First Firing, I had been in college. I was the Student Director for the largest and most visible program at the school. The “adult” Director and I never saw eye-to-eye, and after a tumultuous year and a half of working together, when I returned from my study abroad semester at the end of my junior year, he had moved on. He then calmly informed me that I would be moving on, too.

I wasn't so calm, then.

The Second Firing was better. This time it was almost mutual, even.

But that didn't help me know what to do.

Last time, I was a kid. Nineteen years old. This time I was in my late twenties. I had a wife. I wanted to start a family soon. Wasn't I supposed to have *something* figured out by now?

Well, I didn't have a clue.

It was the end of 2008. My job in the sprawling, high desert suburb of Los Angeles had ended and the economy was taking a deep dive into the proverbial crapper. I had just entered grad school to get an MBA focused in Executive Leadership, though I didn't fully grasp what that meant. (Getting a degree is like a kid trying to catch a squirrel—it seems like a good idea, but we're never quite sure what we'll do once we have it.) A small consulting firm near Pasadena had brought me on as an intern the past spring, and now they agreed to hire me in a more part-time capacity.

At least I knew *that* much.

In my social circles, people were kind. They told me that successful people get fired fairly often. Apparently I was on my way.

Some people know exactly what they want to do with their life. Others, notso much. By the time of the Second Firing, I had perfected the art of the meandering career path. I had worked in small cafes, enormous Fortune 50 organizations, retail stores, tiny offices, restaurants, government agencies, a construction company, a university, a radio station, and a nonprofit. I had done mind-numbing data entry, managed a team of 50+ people, made pizzas, and brewed coffee. I had created and ran an intern program, been an on-air disc jockey, ripped shingles off rooftops, recorded albums and performed my own music in front of thousands of people. I had written proposals and managed budgets. I had coached executives and executed new business programs. I had done a whole lot of stuff, but there didn't seem to be much of a common thread.

At the time of the First Firing, I was swimming in possibilities. This time, I had been out of college for more than half a decade and was toiling away in what university students longingly call "the real world."

Sadly, the "real" world felt pretty *fake* to me.

My head was filled with memories of, almost exclusively, *school*, which prepared me for... what, exactly? A meaningless job? An endless climb up the “corporate ladder?” Or maybe a life of purpose... with a nice side dish of “eternal struggle to pay the rent?”

Something wasn't connecting.

Even more strangely, many people around me seemed to feel the same way I did, but being an “adult” seemed to come with an invisible instruction manual containing one rule:

IGNORE THE DISCONNECT.

“Ignore that you spend the majority of your time — the only resource you never get back — in a job you don't like, being treated like a machine, doing things that kind of ruin the planet.”

And, suddenly, there it was.

The common thread.

All through my winding journey, they had been there: the miserable people who hated their jobs. They were at each of my stops. Sometimes I filled the role myself, and sometimes it was another unlucky sucker. But tragically, unhappiness at work was *always* present.

A vision had entered my mind. Perhaps *this* was my calling—to **help end workplace misery**.

Have you ever known one of these miserable work people?

Have you ever been one?

Chances are good that you can answer YES to *both* of those questions.

What if we could go to work and love what we do *every day*? What if we could have jobs that used our unique abilities and talents? What if our work wasn't just time spent in exchange for a paycheck, but was in service of something profoundly meaningful to us? What if we actually made a difference—a real impact on the world—with our jobs?

It seems noble, but... *really?*

I imagine my utopian tone sounds rather trite. Most likely, you are a person who earned good grades in school (and even if this isn't the case, it wasn't because you *couldn't*). You probably worked hard to get to where you are. If you're in a career, you've paid more than your share of dues. Your own path has taught you to make peace with the way the world "is."

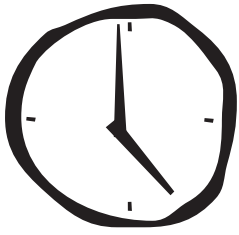
You prefer to call it "reality," not cynicism or being jaded.

But think about your kids (even if they don't exist yet). Then think about *their* kids. And maybe *their* kids. Don't you want something just a little better for *them*?

This section is called "New Answers," not "New Questions," because we've certainly pondered these questions before. But something special is happening right now. For potentially the first time in human history, we have a convergence of things happening which give us **new answers**.

Is the “real world”—as it is now—*really* the best we can do?

No, it's not.



IS
WORK
SUPPOSED TO
SUCK?

When it comes to our work, we often can't connect the dots. We can't join heart and head. We have a bunch of emotional baggage that keeps nagging us from the inside, insisting that work should, well... *feel like work*.

To this I have one question:

Who says?

Who says work needs to feel hard or be painful? *Who says* work should be unfulfilling or tedious? *Who says* work must simultaneously take more of our time and be more miserable than anything else in our lives? *Who says* work has to feel like "work"?

Who says work has to suck?

More importantly, *why have we accepted this as true?*

Over the thousands of years humans have roamed

the planet, we've found many ways to work. From our days as hunters and gatherers to the complex multinational corporate behemoths of the 21st Century, the way we "do business" with each other has continually evolved, sometimes in strange and unexpected ways. But the reality is that for almost all of us, our work occupies the great majority of our lives. We begin working in some capacity when we are teenagers and never really stop. It doesn't matter if we are a tour guide in Beijing, an owner of a children's bookstore in Prague, or a steel worker in Ohio, whatever we do for work defines what the rest of our life can look like. And strangely, despite the fact that the vast majority of our existence is taken with this singular topic of **work**, we spend almost no time thinking about *why* we work the way we do.

The fact that we don't often think about our motivations for work is an important insight in itself. Realizing this disconnect helps us answer the chapter title's question—*Is work supposed to suck?*—because it turns out the answer is NO. It *isn't* supposed to. We're just so busy that we don't have the time or space to internalize that reality.

The other challenge about work is that, like parenting, it's not taught, it's *caught*. This largely explains why we work the way we do (and why it's so hard to change): we see the way our parents work, or our teachers work, or our first managers work, and *we just do that*. It's habit. We don't think about why, we don't stop to ponder, we don't question anything, really; we just *get to work*. We "catch" whatever work styles our role models display just like we catch a virus.

The outcome is that, unless we are blessed with excellent examples (quite rare) or are able to educate ourselves about healthy, life-giving ways to work (hard to find time to do this with all the "work" we have to do!), we're pretty much stuck doing whatever our role models did. It's not intentional bad practice, it's just ignorance.¹ The sad result is that we end up feeling like work IS supposed to suck, because the sucky kind is all we've ever seen modeled.

Then, on top of all these personal misunderstandings about the point of work, we've got organizational structures that *make it worse*.

Think about all the monumental innovations that have occurred in most areas of business, from technology to operations to sales to finance. Despite these advances, there have been virtually *no* real-world changes in the area of organizational design. We could be part of a brilliant new startup building the most progressive, cutting-edge products on the planet, but when it comes to systemizing the way we work together in an organization, we default back to a “departmental model” that hasn’t changed in decades (and is really just a continuation of “scientific management,” which started over 100 years ago!).

This seems ridiculous (and pretty much is), but there are a few good reasons for it.

First, org charts aren’t very sexy. There are many things we can work with that have a “sexy factor” (designer shoes, iPhones, shiny new cars), but the “structure of our company” definitely doesn’t go in that category.

Second, organizational structures are an invisible, conceptual thing. We can’t hold them in our hands or capture them in a photograph or put a soundtrack

to them. This makes working with them inherently more challenging.

Third, as we've already talked about, we are socially conditioned not to think about WHY we work the way we do. It's been clearly communicated to us that "work" means *doing a task*, and anything that doesn't fit snugly in that bucket is clearly "not work."

But we can no longer underestimate the power of these invisible structures we work in, because they create the boundaries we work within. They are the rules. And rules are very, *very* important.

Probably even more important than we realize.

Think of a sports game—what determines how the players play? The rules. What determines the actions they perform on the field/court? The rules. What determines how they spend their time, both during the game and between matches? The rules. What determines what they get paid for, and how much money they make? The rules.

In business, our organizational structures are the

rules. They are the “guidelines on the field,” the social agreements which give us the boundaries for how we can interact with each other. Our structures tell us what we’re allowed to do at work. And while it’s evident that the external rules of business (how we compete due to technology, globalization, etc.) have changed **dramatically** in the last few decades, *the **internal** rules which govern our work relationships have not.*

Unless we can change our organizations at this structural level, the disconnect will create some serious problems for where work is headed.

In fact, we’re already feeling the destructive effects.

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Designing An Organization That Doesn't Suck

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Josh Allan Dykstra

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SAMPLE

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Colorado 2009 <http://asilverthread.com>

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Cover by Austyn Elizabeth Ford, Josh Allan Dykstra, & Jason Walton

Illustrations by Jason Walton
<http://waltonportfolio.com>

Book design by Austyn Elizabeth Ford
<http://austynelizabeth.com>

Copy Editing by Nick Kominitsky

Author photograph by Jonathan Kofahl

ISBN 978-0-9858326-1-2
Printed in the United States of America