

## 'The Myth about Working Hard – A Reality Check.'

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For most of us, we have been taught to work hard in all our endeavors since young. In sports, in school and sometimes, during play, we are always reminded to work hard and put in all our effort. When things do not work out, we are told that what matters most is not the result, but the hard work we put in. There are many reasons for encouraging this notion. For one, it tells us that achievement does not come easy. Next, it teaches us the importance of working hard, and also, instilling the 'never give up' spirit in us. In short, working hard is good and we should work hard in everything we do. Right? Not quite.



As we grow older and become more in tune with reality, things starts to differ and our world-view change. In the real world, working hard can be viewed from an **alternate** angle. In certain fraction of reality, what matters is result, hard work or not, fortunately or unfortunately, does not. Truth is, as long as the results are on the table, no one really cares how much effort is put in.

On the same note, effort serves as a form of indicator to evaluate one's talent, ability and competency. Achieving result with no or minimal effort could means one 'have'. Having to labor through the process could mean one 'do not have'. Of course, time and effort alone is not the clearest indicator because sometimes, we do like to labor our way through certain deeds. Two questions should be answered to further evaluate one's 'have' and 'do not have': 1) Am I enjoying the process? 2) Are there results?

Enjoyment is immeasurable but result is. How much joy one is getting from the process can only be felt by the perpetrator. On the other hand, result, quality and all, is evident to everyone, and the best form of measuring result is against the benchmark. So, if one is enjoying the process, yet has no result to show for, should one continue the endeavor?

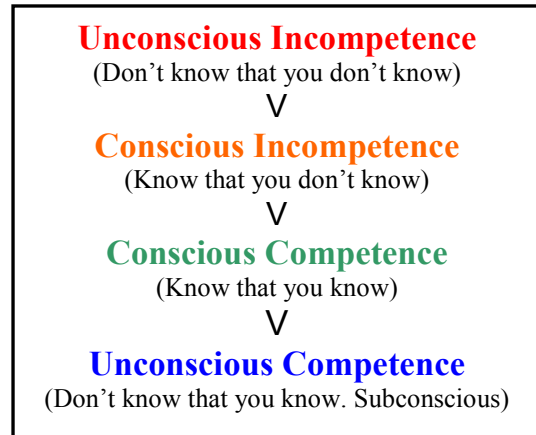
Ideally, results should be achieve with no or minimal effort. In turn, this unused effort can then be invested in achieving other and more results. When one is putting in too much effort and not yielding the desired outcome, perhaps it is time to examine the task at hand and ask the question, 'should I do something else?'

**Everyone is good at something.** Sometimes we know what we are good at (*conscious competence*), sometimes we do not know (*unconscious incompetence*), and sometimes, we are just in denial (*conscious incompetence*).

Here's a snapshot of the Conscious Competency Model, which outlines the 4 different levels one goes through when learning a new skills:

This model is self explanatory. Being conscious of one's incompetence is the starting point of evaluating one's position. Now that I know where I stand, how hard must I work to reach the next level? Is the hard word worthwhile or, would I ever reach the next level? Different people are cut out to do different things. When working in teams, this level can be used identify the right people to perform certain roles and tasks.

*A little more on this model...*



The 4<sup>th</sup> level is where one is so well-oiled at performing certain task that it requires minimal or no effort at all, almost second nature. Thus, his high level of performance has no significant impact on his self-worth.

Like many models, this has its fair share of supporters and critics. Many have argued that there should be a 5<sup>th</sup> level and one of the more convincing claims is that level 5 is 'Complacency' - a combination of routine and confident (over). Complacency will lead to us making mistake that we are not aware of, in order words, 'Don't know that we don't know'. To avoid this, one should always stay abreast of new developments and **competency standards**.

*Going back to the title...*

The purpose of this article is to offer a non-traditional way of looking at one of life's widely accepted norms. It is not to discourage anyone from their current effort but to encourage a sense of reality checking – a square cube fits better in a square hole.



Next time, when someone comes up to you and say he is working hard, try this respond, 'why don't find something you don't have to work hard for!'

*Additional Readings:*

1. [http://changingminds.org/explanations/learning/consciousness\\_competence.htm](http://changingminds.org/explanations/learning/consciousness_competence.htm)
2. <http://www.businessballs.com/consciouscompetencelearningmodel.htm>