How to Escape the Complexity Trap and Get to Work That Matters

simplification

TOOLKIT

Based on the book Why Simple Wins
WHY SIMPLE WINS

The inspiration for “Why Simple Wins” and this Toolkit can be traced to a series of keynotes I delivered to leaders in Europe, Asia, and America. Their workdays—like so many employees around the world—completely revolved around emails, meetings, and reports. There was zero time for strategic imagination, creativity, or high-value work. As I began examining the many obstacles to meaningful work, one root cause kept surfacing: complexity. It existed in the small things like expense reports or email threads and extended to hiring practices, product pipelines, and how leadership communicates to the organization and public.

Working with my firm’s analysts, I conducted corporate research and interviewed everyone from Chief Simplification Officers to heads of procurement; and from lawyers to marketers and HR managers. Along this journey, simplification emerged as the cure to our lack of time for meaningful work and to work cultures that are suffocating from complexity. My firm, futurethink, and I have now developed 13 simplification exercises and tools, which have been tested and perfected with some of the largest, most innovative companies on the planet. Each tool in this Toolkit is designed to address the following aspects of the simplification process:

1 – Awareness
Acknowledgement that complexity exists in the organization, and recognition that we may be inadvertently adding to it.

2 – Identification
Areas of complexity and opportunities for simplification are discovered.

3 – Prioritization
Analysis of individual tasks—how much time they require and how much value they add—leads to prioritization, elimination, and streamlining.

4 – Execution
Simplifying measures are explored, tested, and implemented.

5 – Habit Formation
The purpose for and benefits of simplification are embraced, and metrics for success are established. Through repetition and communication, Simplification is ingrained into the culture as a core value.

Many thanks to the simplifiers across the world whose insights and ideas contributed to these pages. Through this Toolkit, we can all utilize the resources for attacking and eradicating complexity, simplifying our work lives, and accomplishing the kind of work that makes us actually look forward to our jobs in the morning.

Go forth and simplify,

Lisa Bodell, CEO of futurethink
Your Roadmap to Simplification

**LAY FOUNDATIONAL FIRST STEPS**
Tools for individuals, teams, and leaders

- **Simplification Tool** Complexity Diagnostic
- **Simplification Tool** Leadership Complexity Quiz
- **Simplification Tool** Simplicity Vision Statement

**TARGET COMPLEXITY AREAS**
Tools for individuals, teams, and leaders

- **Simplification Tool** 50 Questions for Simplifying
- **Simplification Tool** Kill a Stupid Rule
- **Simplification Tool** Leadership Task Log
- **Simplification Tool** Simplification Metrics
- **Simplification Tool** Leadership Quiz
- **Simplification Tool** Simplicity Vision
- **Simplification Tool** Leadership Task Log

**INDIVIDUALS**

- **Simplification Tool** Simplification Worksheet
- **Simplification Tool** Leadership Quiz
- **Simplification Tool** Simplicity Vision
- **Simplification Tool** Leadership Task Log

**LEADERS**

- **Simplification Tool** 50 Questions for Simplifying
- **Simplification Tool** Kill a Stupid Rule
- **Simplification Tool** Leadership Task Log
- **Simplification Tool** Simplicity Vision
- **Simplification Tool** Leadership Quiz
- **Simplification Tool** Leadership Task Log

**EMBED SIMPLICITY INTO THE ORGANIZATION**

- **Simplification Tool** Simplification Resources
- **Simplification Tool** Killing Complexity
- **Simplification Tool** Interview Questions for Hiring Simplifiers
- **Simplification Tool** Code of Conduct
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WHY THIS TOOL?
Simplification starts on a personal level, and every leader’s behavior and attitude has a definitive effect on the organization. For a simplifying program to be successful, leadership must be accountable for simplification in their daily decisions, communications, and managerial duties. This tool is designed to reveal whether an individual’s leadership behaviors are contributing to complexity or simplification. After taking stock of their own habits, leaders are prompted to modify or eliminate areas of complexity in their work life.

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:  • Relevant for senior leaders

SET-UP:  • Complete the quiz individually and be brutally honest when answering each statement

RECOMMENDED TIMING:  Step 1. Complete quiz: 10 mins.
Step 2. Tally TRUE answers + assess complexity level: 5 mins.
Step 3. Identify simplification opportunities: 15-20 mins.

30-35 mins.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:  Worksheets (emailed to each participant)
## Simplification Tool
### Leadership Complexity Quiz

**STEP 1: COMPLETE QUIZ**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPOND CANDIDLY TO THE FOLLOWING 15 STATEMENTS TO DETERMINE WHERE YOUR BEHAVIORS STAND ON THE COMPLEXITY SCALE</th>
<th>TRUE OR FALSE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I often send emails that are longer than 1 paragraph and/or require significant time to read.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Emails that I send usually include more than 3 cc’s or bcc’s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I expect email replies from staff within 24 hours or by the next business day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I often use business jargon and buzzwords in my written and spoken communication.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I require my team members to involve me in the decisions they make.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. My decisions are always a group effort.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I’ve assigned a project without a clear objective or clear project lead in the past 6 months.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I expect employees to follow formal process steps without exception.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I (or my team) consistently add on to project/product/development work, and I/we rarely eliminate things.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I must sign-off on all expenses, communications, or contracts within my group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I hold multiple, recurring meetings with my team each week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I have held meetings without agendas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. My presentations are known for being lengthy and containing in-depth information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I don’t often provide feedback on reports/presentations that I assign.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I require each of my direct reports to create multiple, recurring reports.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 2: TALLY NUMBER OF TRUE ANSWERS**

Turn the page to reveal your complexity level
### WHAT’S MY COMPLEXITY LEVEL?

| 0 TRUE answers = SUCCESSFUL SIMPLIFIER. | Leaders like you become legends. Your level of trust and risk tolerance is high, which is evidenced by the number of smart decisions being made by your direct reports. Meetings, reports, and presentations are concise and useful under your leadership. You’re open-minded about simplification tools and techniques, and you encourage all levels of employees to question processes without purpose. You walk the simplified talk, and reward your people for doing the same. |
| 1-3 TRUE answers = SIMPLIFIER WITH SIGNS OF COMPLEXITY. | You display many excellent habits, but a few trouble spots show evidence of complexity. If your teams are constantly asking your permission instead of doing valuable work, this may indicate your unwillingness to grant autonomy to others. It’s also possible that your fear of change has prevented a re-examination of what productivity actually looks like in an organization. Address your trouble areas in Step 3. |
| 4-6 TRUE answers = COMPLEXIFIER-IN-TRAINING. | You value traditional processes over simpler and more convenient options, and have a strong conviction about how things should be done. But your tight grip on the reins is a source of frustration to your colleagues and direct reports. You’re associated with long meetings, endless reports and analyses, and unfocused work streams. See Step 3 for how to halt this trend. |
| 7+ TRUE answers = CLASSIC COMPLEXIFIER. | Rather than solving problems, your default mode is to further complicate things. Inadvertently, you’ve trained your employees to inflate, not narrow, the scope of projects, and to view meetings as a stand-in for valuable work. You sometimes struggle to communicate, relying on intricate charts and novel-length emails rather than simple, straightforward messaging. The root causes of your complexity may be fear, the need for control, or a combination of both, but the cure lies in a humble, open-minded approach to simplification. See Step 3 pronto. |

### STEP 3: IDENTIFY SIMPLIFICATION OPPORTUNITIES

Among my TRUE answers, which habits or behaviors do I have the power to change?

Which factors (risk aversion, fear, control, lack of focus/time, etc.) are at the source of my complexity?

Which complexifying habits could I stop doing right now?

1. 

2. 

3. 

Which ones can I place on hiatus as an experiment in simplification?

1. 

2. 

3. 

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Simplification Tool

Complexity Diagnostic

**Simplification Process:**

1. Awareness
2. Identification
3. Prioritization
4. Execution
5. Habit Formation

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WHY THIS TOOL?
Complexity sucks the energy from an organization and prevents it from collaborating, flourishing, or innovating. It can be isolated to one area or permeate an entire culture. This tool is designed to reveal the individual habits and areas of your organization that contribute to complexity. After completing it, you’ll understand where to start simplifying so you and your team can focus on work that actually matters.

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:
• Relevant for all levels of staff
• Ideal for individual leaders and/or entire business units

SET-UP:
• One week before meeting, send participants Complexity Diagnostic worksheets for individual completion
• Encourage everyone to be brutally honest in their assessments
• Assign a scribe to capture discussion on whiteboard or flipchart in meeting

RECOMMENDED TIMING:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1. Individual completion of diagnostic worksheets prior to meeting:</td>
<td>20 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2. Tally category points and total sum to receive diagnosis:</td>
<td>10 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3. Identify high-scoring categories and discuss:</td>
<td>20 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4. Articulate core problems and discuss:</td>
<td>60-90 mins.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

170-230 mins.

Variation: If time is limited, leaders can guide teams with completed worksheets through only Steps 2 and 3.

MATERIALS:
- Worksheets (emailed to each participant, plus hard-copy extras)
- Colored whiteboard markers (separating ideas by color will help organize your thoughts)
- Whiteboard or flipcharts

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### STEP 1: COMPLETE DIAGNOSTIC

Answer each statement according to your personal opinion or from the perspective of your business unit/team. For example, if RARELY is your honest answer to “Simplification is expected and discussed in our organization,” place a 2 in the RARELY category of that statement. If a statement doesn’t apply to you/your team, mark “N/A” (N/A = 0 points) in the NEVER category. Avoid an inaccurate diagnosis by limiting your “N/A” answers to 5 or fewer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DO WE VALUE COMPLEXITY OR SIMPLICITY?</th>
<th>HOW OFTEN IS THIS TRUE?</th>
<th>CATEGORY SCORE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ORGANIZATIONAL:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vision/Communication</td>
<td>1. Simplification is expected and discussed in our organization.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Employees understand the vision and values of our business.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. I believe the messaging from our leaders is clear and authentic.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Messaging I receive from managers is consistent with messaging from senior leaders.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. I view simplicity as a core operating principle of our company.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. I encourage my team to operate with simplification in mind.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Org. Structure</td>
<td>7. Our organizational structure is easy to understand and clearly outlines how my division relates to other functions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Our reporting structure enables me/my team to quickly make decisions and gain approvals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. Productive collaboration occurs between groups in our organization.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. My business unit is free of duplicate functions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>11. I can explain my and my colleagues’ roles in 1-2 jargon-free sentences.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. When I hire/my unit hires a qualified candidate, excessive levels of approval are not required.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13. I/we believe that this organization rewards employees’ simplification efforts.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14. Performance reviews are easy to complete.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Performance reviews are meaningful and help employees improve their performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy/Planning</td>
<td>16. We finalize our annual strategic plan within a quarter (or less).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17. We finalize the budget for the next fiscal year within a quarter (or less).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18. We can easily track our costs against our budget in real time (via a report, online system, etc.), so we can re-adjust or course-correct as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DO WE VALUE COMPLEXITY OR SIMPLICITY?</td>
<td>HOW OFTEN IS THIS TRUE?</td>
<td>CATEGORY SCORE</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ORGANIZATIONAL:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy/Planning (cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. We use our strategic plan as a reference point throughout the year, and it directly connects to our operational plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. We use a balanced scorecard or similar system to track our actions vs. results throughout the year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. My/my team’s simplification efforts are measured against a clear set of metrics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. The legal department advances, not hinders, my/my team’s work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. My team and I would agree that contracts and agreements created within this organization are understandable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. My team and I would agree that contracts and agreements created within this organization are of a reasonable length.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. The legal department provides flexibility to modify documents when necessary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. The legal department provides clear timelines for review of contracts or other legal documents (NDAs, M&amp;A docs, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27. My ability to perform my job isn’t stifled by the day-to-day rules of how things operate in our workplace.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. I’m encouraged/I encourage my team to identify and eliminate redundancies or unnecessary policies and reports wherever possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. At our company, expense sign-off levels are reasonable. Managers’ time isn’t wasted signing off on low-value items.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Once I have approval for something (new hire, capital expense, etc.), I don’t need to ask permission for it again.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Decision-making processes within the organization are clear, quick, and don’t require excessive layers of approval.</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. If I don’t know how to accomplish a task, I know exactly where to go for information or support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. I/we find our company’s tech support process to be easy, clear, and effective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. I aim/encourage my team to template or standardize as many reports, contracts, or processes as possible to create efficiency and scale.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Complexity Diagnostic

#### ORGANIZATIONAL:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCORE</th>
<th>0-Consistently</th>
<th>1-Sometimes</th>
<th>2-Rarely</th>
<th>3-Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operational (cont.)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>35. The number of vendors with which my unit works is manageable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>36. To my knowledge, client or customer complaints are typically resolved in a reasonable amount of time.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Product/Service</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>37. Our product development or R&amp;D departments approach projects with simplicity in mind.</td>
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<tr>
<td>38. We keep the customer at the core of our product development process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>39. We review our new product or service development pipeline and eliminate projects that aren’t showing promise or don’t align with business goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>40. I think the number of products and services we offer is easy to manage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>41. We review our existing product and service offerings and eliminate those that are not performing well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>42. We/our product dev team offers a clear way to give input on new products, services, features.</td>
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<tr>
<td>43. We/our product dev clearly articulates how they prioritize/select the products, services, features to be developed.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### INDIVIDUAL:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCORE</th>
<th>0-Consistently</th>
<th>1-Sometimes</th>
<th>2-Rarely</th>
<th>3-Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meetings</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>44. I spend 20% or less of my time each week in unproductive meetings or calls.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45. I operate/encourage my team to operate with simplification in mind.</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. The meetings I lead/attend start and end on time.</td>
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<td>47. Meetings in my group have a clear purpose and agenda.</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. Only essential people are invited to the meetings I attend.</td>
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<tr>
<td>49. I feel comfortable declining meeting invitations or delegating attendance to someone else.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emails</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>50. I receive a manageable number of work emails and IMs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>51. Email correspondence I receive includes only essential recipients.</td>
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<tr>
<td>52. Emails sent from my team are concise and clear.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>DO WE VALUE COMPLEXITY OR SIMPLICITY</td>
<td>HOW OFTEN IS THIS TRUE?</td>
<td>CATEGORY SCORE</td>
<td></td>
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<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL:</td>
<td></td>
<td>0-Consistently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>53. Every report to which I contribute serves a clear purpose and adds value or insight to the organization.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>54. My team and I would agree that the number and frequency of reports we’re asked to generate is reasonable.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>55. Data needed for reports in my group is easily accessed and compiled.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>56. My team and I would agree that the number of PowerPoints or presentations our group generates is reasonable.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>57. My/my team’s PowerPoints or presentations are understandable and fact-driven with visuals that serve to simplify data or illustrate possibilities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>58. The presentations I create/my team creates are short and leave time for discussion and next steps.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>59. We view our presentations as valuable and worthy of our time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Staff Time</td>
<td>60. I am encouraged/encourage my team to find smart workarounds and timesavers that solve a problem or address a client need.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61. I’ve observed/bestowed recognition or rewards for smart workarounds and timesavers that solve a problem or address a client need.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62. I don’t/management doesn’t create unnecessary urgency or set false deadlines to speed delivery of work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63. I am never asked to do unnecessary busy work. When I’m busy, it is because I’m doing meaningful work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 2: TALLY CATEGORY POINTS + SCORE**

Add up your points for each category section (N/A answers are worth 0 points) in the far right column. Then tally the category sums for your diagnostic score.

**Overall Score:**

Compare your total score to the diagnoses on the next page.

Turn the page to reveal your diagnosis
**DIAGNOSIS:**

- **0 points = STRONGLY SIMPLIFIED.** Congratulations: Your organization is among the healthy few that aren’t suffering from complexity. Simplification is encouraged and rewarded across your business, and messaging from leaders is consistent and authentic. Boost your immunity by keeping your focus on valuable work and questioning any process without purpose.

- **1-20 points = OPPORTUNITIES FOR SIMPLIFICATION.** Your organization is functional but a handful of NEVER or RARELY answers are reducing overall productivity and negatively impacting morale. To prevent further damage, continue to Step 3.

- **21-50 points = COMPLEX.** Complexity is bottlenecking one or more areas of your business, and will spread to others if left unchecked. Operations are likely clogged by policies and processes or there’s a disconnection between senior leaders and the rest of the organization. Pinpoint the exact areas of complexity in Step 3.

- **51-70 points = SERIOUS COMPLEXITY.** Complacency has already set in, possibly at the highest levels of leadership, and your organization’s core values have been replaced by frustration, fear, and powerlessness. From meetings and messaging to hiring and tech support, nothing is simple or swift in your workplace. Get treatment now in Step 3.

- **71+ points = DANGEROUS COMPLEXITY.** Complexity is paralyzing your organization and every corner of your business has been affected. Resources are being wasted on a massive scale, but employees have been trained to shrug and maintain the status quo. Some areas of the organization are barely functioning, which has put your business at risk of a takeover or going under. To start fighting this disease at the source, turn to Step 3 in a hurry.

**STEP 3: IDENTIFY HIGH-SCORING CATEGORIES**

My categories with the highest scores:

1. 
2. 
3. 

Assign a scribe to list categories with the highest scores on a whiteboard, and capture teams’ answers to all the questions below.

Discuss:

- Did everyone list the same highest-scoring categories? If yes, these are your organization’s main areas of complexity.
- If not, where are the differences? Continue discussing until you determine the most crucial areas to focus on.

**STEP 4: ARTICULATE CORE PROBLEMS**

For each NEVER or RARELY answer in those 3 categories, specify which statement it was for, and discuss the key issue that’s driving the complexity:

1. **Statement #____ Core Problem:**
2. **Statement #____ Core Problem:**
3. **Statement #____ Core Problem:**
4. **Statement #____ Core Problem:**
5. **Statement #____ Core Problem:**
### Simplification Tool

#### Complexity Diagnostic

**STEP 4: ARTICULATE CORE PROBLEMS (cont.)**

1. **Statement #6 Core Problem:**
2. **Statement #7 Core Problem:**
3. **Statement #8 Core Problem:**
4. **Statement #9 Core Problem:**
5. **Statement #10 Core Problem:**

**STEP 5: BRAINSTORM DREAM SOLUTIONS**

What solution would turn a NEVER or RARELY answer into a CONSISTENTLY answer? Use the following prompts for removing complexity in all 3 categories:

- What can we stop doing immediately?
- If we can’t eliminate the problem, how can we minimize it, reduce it, or do less of it?
- Is there an opportunity to outsource or consolidate this ongoing issue with a similar or related activity?
- What can we streamline to resolve this issue?

1. **Statement #1 Dream Solution:**
2. **Statement #2 Dream Solution:**
3. **Statement #3 Dream Solution:**
4. **Statement #4 Dream Solution:**
5. **Statement #5 Dream Solution:**
6. **Statement #6 Dream Solution:**
7. **Statement #7 Dream Solution:**
8. **Statement #8 Dream Solution:**
9. **Statement #9 Dream Solution:**
10. **Statement #10 Dream Solution:**
Simplification Tool

Simplicity Vision

Statement

Simplification Process:

☐ 1 – Awareness
☐ 2 – Identification
☐ 3 – Prioritization
☐ 4 – Execution
☐ 5 – Habit Formation

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WHY THIS TOOL?
An essential step in the simplifying process, your Simplicity Vision Statement enables you to articulate your goals for simplification and how you envision it impacting the organization. Like a traditional mission vision statement, it is designed to unite your organization around a collective direction for the company. This exercise will help you identify, define, and communicate the simplification behaviors that should be embedded into your culture for the long-term.

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:
- Relevant for senior leaders

SET-UP VARIATIONS:
- Variation #1: Leader completes Q&A Worksheet in advance of meeting and shares worksheet with peers (or teams) in the session to get feedback/revise the statement. Skip STEP 2.
- Variation #2: Leader and simplification team individually complete Q&A Worksheet in the session and collectively draft/revise statement.

RECOMMENDED TIMING:
Step 1. Complete Q&A Worksheet: 30 mins.
Step 2. Share answers + discuss: 30 mins.
Step 4. Solicit feedback + revise: 60 mins.
150 mins.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:
Worksheets (emailed or provided to each participant in meeting)
## Simplification Tool

### Simplicity Vision Statement

**STEP 1: COMPLETE Q&A WORKSHEET**

To clarify goals and expectations around what simplification will achieve for your organization, start by capturing your initial thoughts beneath each question. Then polish your ideas into clear, specific statements in the answer column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS (CAPTURE IDEAS BELOW)</th>
<th>ANSWERS (POLISH IDEAS BELOW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Why is simplification important to us?</td>
<td>Simplification is important because:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What 3 things, when simplified, do we think will have the greatest impact on our jobs or business?</td>
<td>The 3 simplifications with the greatest impact will be: 1. 2. 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In what ways can we experience more workplace simplicity every day?</td>
<td>On a daily basis, we'll see small changes like:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If we simplify how we work, what will the result be (financial, behavioral, time-savings, etc.)?</td>
<td>We'll be able to measure results like:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How will we know when our work/business unit/function is simplified?</td>
<td>We'll be in a state of simplification when this happens:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What new simplification skills will we use on a daily basis?</td>
<td>People will be more...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A year from now, how did we make simplification a habit?</td>
<td>Simplification will become a habit if we...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## QUESTIONS (CONT.)
(CAPTURE IDEAS BELOW)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>ANSWER (CONT.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Looking back, what was our biggest barrier to simplification?</td>
<td>The biggest barrier we need to tackle is…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. If we hadn’t made simplification a habit, what would have happened?</td>
<td>If we don’t make simplification a habit, the result will be…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What will simplification help us achieve—personally and professionally?</td>
<td>Simplification will do this for our business:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For each other:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For me:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. In 1 sentence, what does simplicity mean to us?</td>
<td>Simplicity is…</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STEP 2: SHARE ANSWERS + DISCUSS

If conducting this exercise as a group, share your individual answers and discuss the following:

- What are the similarities between our answers?
- What are the differences between them?
- Which answers reflect simplification as a core value of our business?
- Of those answers, which 1-3 offer the most promising statements for our organization’s Simplicity Vision? (Take a vote if necessary.)

Possible Statement #1.

Possible Statement #2.

Possible Statement #3.

STEP 3: DRAFT SIMPLICITY VISION STATEMENT

Drawing from your worksheet (or from 3 possibilities above if conducting exercise as a group), draft your organization’s Simplicity Vision Statement.

Simplicity is

It will enable our organization to

STEP 4: SOLICIT FEEDBACK + REVISE

Send your Simplicity Vision Statement to mentors, peers, and trusted partners from inside and outside your organization, asking them to identify weaknesses and recommend ways to strengthen it. Alternatively, invite your entire organization to collaborate on the final version. After it’s finalized, share it enterprise-wide.

Simplification is

It will enable our organization to
Simplification Tool

Leadership Task Log

Simplification Process:

- 1 – Awareness
- 2 – Identification
- 3 – Prioritization
- 4 – Execution
- 5 – Habit Formation

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WHY THIS TOOL?

This tool is designed to increase individual awareness among leaders on how they spend their time. After auto-tracking their time for a week with an app or plug-in, participants will know if the majority of their time is devoted to valuable work, on low-level tasks, or reacting to urgent, unplanned matters. Armed with this data, they will make decisions about which tasks should be outsourced, delegated, and eliminated so they can dedicate more time to work that matters.

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:

- Relevant for senior leaders

RECOMMENDED TIMING:

Step 1. Download task tracker: 5 mins.
Step 2. Auto-track tasks for 1 week: N/A
Step 3. Add up your daily totals in each category: 15 mins.
Step 4. Determine weekly percentages: 15 mins.
Step 5. Identify opportunities for change + action: 60 mins.

95 mins.

Variation: Exercise can be conducted individually or in pairs.

MATERIALS:

Worksheets (enough for each participant, plus a few extra)
**STEP 1: DOWNLOAD TASK TRACKER**

Install one of the following plug-ins or apps to auto-track how you spend your time for a week:

- **Klok** (free; PC and Mac compatible)
- **Simple Time Track** (free; Chrome browsers only)
- **Hours Keeper** (free; iPhone and iPad only)
- **Time Master** ($9.99 USD; iPhone and iPad only)
- **Timesheet** (free; Android only)

**STEP 2: AUTO-TRACK TASKS FOR 1 WEEK**

Use your preferred app or plug-in to track your time over 7 days in the areas listed in the left column below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK AREAS</th>
<th>MON.</th>
<th>TUES.</th>
<th>WED.</th>
<th>THURS.</th>
<th>FRI.</th>
<th>SAT.</th>
<th>SUN.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Org. Structure</td>
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<td>HR</td>
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<td>Marketing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy/Planning</td>
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<td>Operational</td>
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<td>Meetings</td>
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<td>Email</td>
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<td>Reports</td>
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<td>Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
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</tbody>
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**STEP 3: ADD UP YOUR DAILY TOTALS IN EACH AREA**
STEP 4: DETERMINE WEEKLY PERCENTAGES

Add up the sum for all your weekly hours and write your total at bottom of the middle column. To get percentages for the right column, divide each category by your TOTAL number of hours and multiply by 100. For example, if your total weekly hours are 52 and you spent 16 weekly hours in meetings, your formula is: \( \frac{16}{52} = 0.307 \times 100 = 30.7\% \). Once you have your weekly percentages, mark an asterisk* beside the 3 categories that contribute the most value to your role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK AREAS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF WEEKLY HOURS</th>
<th>% OF TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Meetings</td>
<td>16 hours spent in meetings (out of 52 total weekly hours)</td>
<td>(16 ÷ 52 = 0.307 x 100) 30.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Org. Structure</td>
<td></td>
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<td>HR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
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<td>Strategy/Planning</td>
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<td>Operational</td>
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<td>Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
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<td>Reports</td>
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<td>Presentations</td>
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<td>Admin.</td>
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<td>Travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS:</strong></td>
<td><strong>_________________________</strong> HOURS</td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STEP 5: IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE + ACTION

1. What are the top 3 areas where you spend most of your time?

2. Are these the same as your valuable, asterisked areas? If not, why?

3. What percentage of your time did you spend on valuable work?

4. After reviewing where you spent your time, what was the biggest revelation?

5. Were the majority of your hours devoted to scheduled tasks or reacting to unplanned, urgent matters? If the latter, what can you modify so that your time is less monopolized by others? Consider the following tactics:
   - I will say no at least 3 times a day to tasks that don’t add value.
   - I will designate certain tasks to certain times of the day.
   - I will always prioritize important work over other tasks.
STEP 5: IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE + ACTION (cont.)

6. In which categories would you prefer to spend more time?

7. Which task area is your biggest time-waster? Write it below and challenge yourself to avoid it for 30 days and re-evaluate its actual value a month from now.

8. Which task areas should you start outsourcing or delegating?

9. What is the 1 thing you could adjust for better use of your time? (If doing this exercise in pairs, evaluate each other’s lists and identify up to 5 tasks to avoid.)

10. Articulate exactly how you’ll achieve this 1 change that will make better use of your time:
Simplification Tool

50 Questions for Simplifying

Simplification Process:
- 1 – Awareness
- 2 – Identification
- 3 – Prioritization
- 4 – Execution
- 5 – Habit Formation

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WHY THIS TOOL?

This tool poses a series of questions that are designed to lead staff out of day-to-day complexity. Whether you’re seeking a starting point for simplification, solving an ongoing issue, or considering a new process or procedure, these questions serve as a litmus test for simplification. This exercise can either follow the Complexity Diagnostic, which reveals specific areas of complexity within your organization, or it can be used as a stand-alone tool for problem solving. As your organization embraces simplification, 50 Questions can become part of the decision-making process in every corner of your business, from meetings to outsourcing to messaging.

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: • Relevant for all levels of staff

SET-UP VARIATIONS: • Variation #1: Do the exercise individually.
• Variation #2: Do the exercise as a group. Break into teams and assign each team an area of complexity.
• Variation #3: Leader chooses 5 questions in relevant areas of complexity and sends to participants for completion in advance of meeting. Solutions are then proposed and discussed in the group session.

RECOMMENDED TIMING: Step 1. Define simplification challenge: 5 mins.
Step 2. Choose 1-3 areas of complexity: 10 mins.
Step 3. Answer 5 questions within each area of complexity: 30 mins.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

- Worksheets (enough for each participant + a few extra)
- Colored whiteboard markers and pens (separating ideas by color will help organize your thoughts)
- Whiteboard or flipcharts

Contributors: Maurice Boland, Michael Bungay Stainer, Louis Carter, Meredith Cherwony, Debra Clary, Mayun Ghosh, Mike Gluck, Adam Grant, Ludger Hentschel, James P Kelleher, Peter Klein, Ayuko Mueller, Howard Prager, Bob Reinheimer, Marisa Ricciardi, Rowena Rothman, Erin Seuffert, Alexandra Yaghoobi, John Young
STEP 1: DEFINE SIMPLIFICATION CHALLENGE
Articulate the goal of this simplification session using as specific terms as possible. Examples could be “Increase productivity by granting X department access to Y data” or “Improve exchange of real-time information between marketing and sales.” If your organization’s complexity seems too overwhelming to specify, create a general challenge like “Simplify the daily and monthly processes used in our department.”

MY/OUR SIMPLIFICATION CHALLENGE:

---

STEP 2 + 3: CHOOSE 1-3 AREAS OF COMPLEXITY + ANSWER 5 QUESTIONS WITHIN EACH AREA
Use your simplification challenge to determine which areas of complexity to focus on. For example, if your challenge is to “Increase productivity by granting X department access to Y database,” choose 5 questions in the Repeatable and Accessible areas of complexity. If you created a general challenge, focus on the Minimal and Valuable areas. When conducting this exercise as a group, break into teams and assign each an area of complexity. Review all the questions in your chosen area of complexity and choose 5 that speak to the root cause of your challenge. (Or write your own brilliant simplification questions in the spaces provided.) In STEP 4, you will build your answers into solutions.

Is it Valuable?
(Use these questions to determine what’s necessary or worth your time.)

☐ 1. Which activities or tasks in my daily work add the most value for stakeholders (clients, partners, etc.)?

☐ 2. If a natural disaster struck our headquarters tonight, what’s the most crucial item of business that staff would pitch in to accomplish?

☐ 3. Which activities or tasks make me feel good about my job and give me the sense that I’ve truly contributed to the organization’s mission?

☐ 4. When I head to work, what do I most look forward to doing and why?

☐ 5. Which product or service drives the most enthusiasm, emotion, and purchases from prospective and current clients?

☐ 6. What is the most important activity for keeping employees or customers happy and engaged?

☐ 7. In terms of the 80-20 rule—where staff spends 80% of time on 20% of the work—how can I shift this ratio so I’m spending the majority of time on more valuable work?

☐ 8. I just won a trip that departs in 24 hours: What are the most important things I need to get done before I leave?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.
9. While I’m on that trip, what would I delegate to colleagues for follow-up and why? Would I classify those tasks as valuable or required/routine/time-sensitive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUABLE</th>
<th>REQUIRED/ROUTINE/TIME-SENSITIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. If I divided my meetings into two columns—those that are worth my time and those for which an email update would suffice—what changes could I make right now?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEETINGS WORTH MY TIME</th>
<th>MEETINGS THAT COULD BE EMAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which of the above meetings could—and should—become an email today?

11. If I divided my work into tasks that delight me and tasks I find loathsome, what could be eliminated, changed, or accomplished in less loathsome ways?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DELIGHTFUL TASKS</th>
<th>LOATHSOME TASKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What changes could be made to 1 LOATHSOME task that would compel me move it into the DELIGHTFUL column?

12. Which tasks take time or energy away from my critical goals?

13. If I could clone myself today, what’s the first thing I’d assign to him/her? What’s preventing me from delegating it to someone else today?

14. What one thing would I do to save this company $10,000 tomorrow?

15. What percentage of my day allows for unstructured time on work that matters? What could I change to increase my daily, unstructured time?
16. After itemizing my weekly tasks—including calls, meetings, and emails—which ones actually benefit my customers or clients?

**BENEFITS CLIENTS/CUSTOMERS**
1. 
2. 
3. 

**NO BENEFIT FOR CLIENTS/CUSTOMERS**
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

Which of the above tasks could be eliminated to restore more time for tasks that do benefit my clients/customers?

17. In what ways do my team members contribute to complexity? What advice do I have for changing those behaviors?

18. If we no longer offered this ___________ (product/service/process), would we be willing to pay for it? How much?

My customized question: __________________________________________________________________________

My customized question: __________________________________________________________________________

My customized question: __________________________________________________________________________

Is it **Minimal?**

(Use these questions to assess if something is streamlined or reduced to its simplest possible form.)

19. What should I stop doing?

20. What can I start saying **no** to?

21. If I could kill any rule at work that holds me back from being more effective or productive, what would it be?

22. If a new CEO started at our company tomorrow, what processes would s/he immediately observe as the biggest time-wasters?

23. For every new thing we add to our product pipeline, what could be eliminated? (Which process? Meeting? Standing call?)

24. What would happen if this rule/process/etc. didn’t exist?

25. If I had to eliminate 25% of what I do every day, what would I eliminate and why?

26. In which situations does the company require multiple approvals for an action or expenditure when a single approval or auto-approval (within certain limits) would suffice?
27. If proposals for product/service/process enhancements are required to go through layers of review, how could we dramatically reduce these layers and speed up the process?

28. If I could limit the work I provide to other functions or teams, what activity would I like to stop doing immediately?

29. Could another individual (internal or external) do some of the work I do? If so, list these below:
   1.
   2.
   3.
   What’s preventing me from delegating at least one of these tasks today?

30. How could we shorten this document/proposal/contract/presentation to 1 page?

31. What are the most complex aspects of my job?
   1.
   2.
   3.

32. What redundancies could be eliminated from my job right now?
   1.
   2.
   3.
   What’s preventing me from removing at least 1 of these redundancies today?

33. What is the minimal amount of data we need to satisfy our objective? If we’re providing more, can we agree to stop doing this today?

34. If I had to get the same amount of work done in half the time, what would I do differently?

35. What is 1 small change I could make that would have a big impact? Is anything preventing me from proposing or implementing that change?

My customized question: __________________________________________

My customized question: __________________________________________

My customized question: __________________________________________
Simplification Tool
50 Questions for Simplifying

Is it Understandable? 
(Use these questions to determine if communication on a topic is as clear as possible.)

- 36. Could I clearly explain this to anyone outside my business group?
- 37. What jargon could be eliminated from this document or message?
- 38. How can this message be distilled down to 1 sentence?
- 39. How could this communication be simplified so people actually read it and take the desired action?
- 40. Have we clearly established the person or team responsible for this deliverable and the corresponding deadlines?
- My customized question: ______________________________
- My customized question: ______________________________
- My customized question: ______________________________

Is it Repeatable? 
(Use these questions to decide if a task or process is as automated, templated, or scalable as possible.)

- 41. If we automated some or all of this task/process, who would benefit?
- 42. Can this process be easily replicated for other teams/markets?
- 43. What would make it easily repeatable for other people to use?
- 44. If significant training is required to learn this process, what could we modify so less training is required?
- 45. Can we create a template for this task or process so others can use it?
- 46. How much time or money could we save in a year by automating this?
- My customized question: ______________________________
- My customized question: ______________________________
- My customized question: ______________________________
Is it **Accessible?**
(Use these questions to determine if an information source is as readily available to its audience as possible.)

☐ 47. Are employees able to access information they need in real time? If not, how can we improve access for them?

☐ 48. How could customers more easily do business with us?

☐ 49. Would other departments or divisions benefit from access to our systems or data? Would we benefit by empowering them to do more of the work themselves?

☐ 50. Is there value or increased efficiency in making this product/data/service available to more employees or customers? If so, how could we do this?

☐ My customized question: __________________________________________________________

☐ My customized question: __________________________________________________________

☐ My customized question: __________________________________________________________

**STEP 4: GENERATE 3-5 SOLUTIONS FOR SIMPLIFYING**

Would outsourcing solve your issue? What about outright elimination of the troublesome process or task? What aspects or steps could be removed to streamline the overall process? Generate solutions either individually or as a group using a whiteboard or flipchart.

If you identify solutions that can be implemented immediately, these are the quick wins that you should move forward on. If you identified any solutions that would have high impact but need further research, assign responsibility to teams/team members with clear deadlines and schedule a follow-up meeting before ending the session.

**QUICK WIN SOLUTIONS:**

1. __________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________

**REGROUP ON THESE SOLUTIONS:**

1. __________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________

**ASSIGNED TEAM MEMBER:** __________________________________

**DEADLINE:** ____________________________________________

**FOLLOW-UP MEETING DATE:** ________________________________
Simplification Tool

Simplification Worksheet

**Simplification Process:**

- 1 – Awareness
- 2 – Identification
- 3 – Prioritization
- 4 – Execution
- 5 – Habit Formation

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WHY THIS TOOL?
This quick exercise allows staff to identify their most time-consuming or complex tasks—and find ways to streamline and simplify them. Employees engage in critical problem solving, leaders uncover staff pain points, and by the end of the session, tasks with the least value are on the chopping block (or, at the very least, on suspension).

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: • Relevant for all levels of staff
    • Include at least one senior leader with authority to approve changes to staff tasks

RECOMMENDED TIMING: Step 1. Identify most time-consuming, redundant, or complex tasks: 5 mins.
Step 2. Describe these tasks: 5 mins.
Step 3. Specify tactics for simplifying these tasks: 10 mins.
Step 4. Group discussion and leader review: 10 mins.
30 mins.

MATERIALS:
- Worksheets (emailed or provided to each participant in meeting)
- Colored whiteboard markers (separating ideas by color will help organize your thoughts)
- Whiteboard or flipcharts
Simplification starts with identifying what’s complicated. Answer the following questions to uncover what’s holding you back from being more productive, innovative, or efficient. Then pinpoint ways to simplify those complex tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP 1: WHAT IS COMPLEX, REDUNDANT, OR TIME-CONSUMING?</th>
<th>STEP 2: WHY?</th>
<th>STEP 3: HOW TO CHANGE IT? (Specify tactics for simplifying each task, such as streamlining, outsourcing, or eliminating.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: What task is most time-consuming for you?</td>
<td>Quarterly proposals for clients outlining recommended events, marketing, &amp; PR programs.</td>
<td>Each proposal involves many images, tons of formatting, and I have to chase content from other offices in different time zones. Multiple authors &amp; versions make it hard to track most up-to-date file. I end up pulling content from 5 different versions into one master deck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What task is most time-consuming for you?</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reduce images to 1 per page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What task is most time-consuming for your colleagues?</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Only use basic formatting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is the most complex aspect of your job?</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Use Google docs/collaboration tool so there’s 1 version &amp; each department is responsible for adding its content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What redundant task would you like to remove from your job description?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What small task is your biggest time-suck?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What task do you wish you could eliminate from your responsibilities today?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STEP 4: GROUP DISCUSSION + LEADER REVIEW

As a group, discuss the following with the goal of identifying tasks that add the least value. Elimination or suspension of at least one task per team member is highly encouraged.

1. What exceptional time-saving solutions did team members offer for their most consuming tasks?

2. Can any of these solutions be applied to other team members’ tasks?

3. Is there any duplication of tasks between team members? If so, can just one person complete this task?

4. Of the tasks that employees wish they could eliminate, which can you get rid of? Or suspend for 30 days? A month from now, re-examine the value of those tasks as a group or in one-on-ones.
WHY THIS TOOL?
Do you spend your time working on high- or low-value tasks? Are those tasks simple or complex? Whether you’re designing an IT system or compiling status reports, this tool will help you identify how you spend your time, determine the value and complexity of those tasks, and how to simplify or eliminate low-value work.

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:
• Relevant for all levels of staff

SET-UP:
• This tool can be done individually or as a group
• If done as a group:
  • Include as many team members as possible from your business unit for a variety of perspectives
  • One week before meeting, send participants the Task Worksheet for identification of typical workday tasks
  • Hold your session in a room with whiteboards or enough wall space to accommodate 2 flip charts

RECOMMENDED TIMING:
Step 1. List your current tasks: 10 mins.
Step 2. Assign a time to each task: 5 mins.
Step 3. Assign value to each task: 5 mins.
Step 5. Plot tasks on matrix + discuss: 5 - 30 mins.
55 - 95 mins.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:
Worksheets (emailed to each participant, plus hard-copy extras)
Whiteboard or flipcharts (pre-draw the Complexity Scale and Value Matrix)
Colored whiteboard markers and pens (separating ideas by color will help organize your thoughts)
Plenty of sticky notes if conducting exercise as a group (10 notes per participant, plus a few extra)
**STEP 1: LIST YOUR CURRENT TASKS**

In Column #1 of the Task Worksheet below, list each task on which you spend your time. Include daily, weekly, or monthly activities.

**TIPS FOR SUCCESS:**
- Break large tasks down into separate steps or components. This will help identify which aspects of a particular task don’t provide enough value to justify the time investment.
- If the task is large-scale (e.g., ‘brain surgery’), it might require its own task worksheet.
- Some items on your list may be tasks you’re in charge of, and some may be activities in which you attend/participate/play a role. Be specific about your role in that task (e.g., ‘run weekly staff meeting,’ not ‘meetings’).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Tasks</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Define Task Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Attend weekly status meeting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>People repeat the same info every week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**SCALE SUMMARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Significant Time</td>
<td>1 – No Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Some Time</td>
<td>2 – Little Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Little Time</td>
<td>3 – Some Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – No Time</td>
<td>4 – Very Valuable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Simplification Tool**

**Killing Complexity**

### STEP 2: ASSIGN A TIME TO EACH TASK

Review the descriptions below and in Column #2 of the Task Worksheet, place the number that best describes the amount of time you typically spend on each task.

**TIP FOR SUCCESS:** If timing for the task varies, choose a number that represents the average time you spend (i.e., are most weekly status meetings a 2?).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGNIFICANT TIME TO COMPLETE</th>
<th>SOME TIME TO COMPLETE</th>
<th>LITTLE TIME TO COMPLETE</th>
<th>NO TIME TO COMPLETE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult or cumbersome</td>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>Relatively easy, fast</td>
<td>Very easy, fast, concise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many people, steps, layers, approvals, decisions</td>
<td>Involves people, steps, layers, approvals, decisions</td>
<td>Few people, steps, layers, approvals, decisions</td>
<td>Few or no people, steps, layers, approvals, decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STEP 3: ASSIGN VALUE TO EACH TASK

Review the descriptions below and in Column #3 of the Task Worksheet, choose a number that best describes the approximate value each task provides for the business.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO VALUE</th>
<th>LITTLE VALUE</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT VALUABLE</th>
<th>VERY VALUABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distracts from achieving goals</td>
<td>Doesn’t help achieve goals</td>
<td>Helps meet your goals, although not always directly</td>
<td>Important for achieving your goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serves no clear business purpose</td>
<td>Indirectly supports the business</td>
<td>Helps drives business forward</td>
<td>Directly contributes to driving business forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates problems/gets in the way</td>
<td>Time could be used better</td>
<td>Contributes to solutions</td>
<td>Creates new solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redundant or unnecessary</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adds some revenue</td>
<td>Adds revenue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STEP 4: DEFINE TASK PROBLEMS

Refer back to your Task Worksheet. Next to each of your tasks in Column #4, identify which aspects of each task waste time and/or make the task less valuable.
STEP 5: PLOT TASKS ON MATRIX + DISCUSS

Using your scores from the Task Worksheet, plot your tasks on the Time vs. Value Matrix below. Each task must be placed in a specific quadrant. If conducting this exercise as a group, re-create the matrix on a flip chart or whiteboard and instruct participants to write tasks on sticky notes and plot them on a shared matrix.

• **Q3** – Consider how these tasks could be simplified.

• **Q1** – These are low-value tasks that should be ELIMINATED.

• **Q4** – These tasks are valuable best practices and represent what all of our tasks should aspire to.

• **Q2** – Decide whether the value of these tasks should be re-evaluated. If not, consider eliminating them based on their low value.

**Discuss:**

- What kinds of tasks are represented in each quadrant (i.e. reporting, presentations, etc.)? Are there common themes?
- Is the majority of your/our time being spent on tasks that are valuable? If not, why?
- If doing this exercise as a group, ask participants if any identical tasks received varying levels of time or value from different team members? If so, this may indicate varying experience levels, and present an opportunity for training or consolidation of the task to fewer people.

- **🌟** Look at the top right quadrant: can these high-value tasks be improved upon? If so, outline your approach to simplifying these tasks in STEP 6.

- **✗** Look at the lower left quadrant: what's stopping you from eliminating these tasks from your life? Outline your approach to simplifying these tasks in STEP 6.

- **❓** Look at the bottom right: what can you modify to make these tasks more valuable? Outline your approach to simplifying these tasks in STEP 6.

- **✓** Look at the top left quadrant: can you streamline or improve these tasks to lessen their complexity and time investment? Outline your approach to simplifying these tasks in STEP 6.
STEP 6: GENERATE SOLUTIONS + DISCUSS
Based on your answers to the discussion questions in STEP 5, use the table below to simplify your tasks. Tasks that appear in Q1-Q3 of the matrix should be priority.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Next Steps + Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|      | □ Eliminate  
□ Outsource  
□ Streamline |                        |
|      | □ Eliminate  
□ Outsource  
□ Streamline |                        |
|      | □ Eliminate  
□ Outsource  
□ Streamline |                        |
|      | □ Eliminate  
□ Outsource  
□ Streamline |                        |
|      | □ Eliminate  
□ Outsource  
□ Streamline |                        |
|      | □ Eliminate  
□ Outsource  
□ Streamline |                        |
|      | □ Eliminate  
□ Outsource  
□ Streamline |                        |
|      | □ Eliminate  
□ Outsource  
□ Streamline |                        |
|      | □ Eliminate  
□ Outsource  
□ Streamline |                        |
|      | □ Eliminate  
□ Outsource  
□ Streamline |                        |

If conducting this exercise as a group, discuss:

- What was the most common approach to our solutions: eliminate, outsource, or streamline? Why do we think that is?
- Which solutions can we act on immediately?
- Which solutions involve other people/approvals to act upon?
- Which solutions should we pilot to see if they work?
- Which solutions should we prioritize to move forward on?
Simplification Tool

Kill a Stupid Rule

Simplification Process:

1. Awareness
2. Identification
3. Prioritization
4. Execution
5. Habit Formation
**Simplification Tool**  
*Kill a Stupid Rule*

**WHY THIS TOOL?**
Processes should simplify your business, but excess procedure will suffocate it. Kill a Stupid Rule offers a simple solution to complex processes that were created in the name of “efficiency.” Most companies find that their most vilified rules aren’t actually rules at all. They’re often annoying procedures, like standing reports or conference calls, expense-reimbursement protocol, and layers of approval. Challenging accepted rules and methods of doing business enables us to change them for the better. Through this exercise, employees are empowered to identify rules that constrain their productivity, and leaders get a strong pulse on where change is most needed.

**HOW IT WORKS**

**SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:**
- Relevant for all levels of staff
- Include at least one senior leader with authority to kill or suspend rules

**SET-UP:**
- Include as many team members as possible from your business unit for a variety of perspectives
- Assign a scribe to capture answers to the group-discussion questions

**RECOMMENDED TIMING:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1. Identify stupid rules:</td>
<td>15 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2. Plot stupid rules on matrix:</td>
<td>10 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3. Evaluate + discuss as a group:</td>
<td>20 mins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>55 mins.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUGGESTED MATERIALS:**
- Worksheets (enough for each participant + a few extra)
- Colored whiteboard markers and pens (separating ideas by color will help organize your thoughts)
- Whiteboard or flipcharts (pre-draw the Impact/Implementation Matrix)
- Plenty of sticky notes (5 notes per participant, plus a few extra)

For a video introduction to Kill a Stupid Rule, click on the image above or go to: [http://bit.ly/1pbFpZT](http://bit.ly/1pbFpZT)
STEP 1: IDENTIFY STUPID RULES

Using the worksheets below, list 3 or more rules that frustrate you or slow down your productivity. Then decide whether those rules should be killed or modified. Feel free to focus only on internal rules instead of customer/client rules (or vice versa). As you’re considering which rules to choose, keep the following in mind:

- **Red rules vs. green rules:** Red rules are government-regulated and illegal to change, so they’re off limits. Everything else is a green rule and fair game.
- **Focus on your business unit or function:** By concentrating on the rules that affect the area you operate within, you’re in a better position to make the case for killing or modifying a rule.
- **Not a gripe session:** This exercise is an ideal opportunity for a productive discussion about what doesn’t work, but keep it centered on solutions, not cross talk or complaining.
- **Rewrite the rule:** If you can’t kill a rule for some reason, provide specific suggestions on how to modify and make it less frustrating.

### Internal Rules

**Consider:**
- Which systems or protocols frustrate you at work?
- Which processes/reports/forms would you eliminate or simplify to make your job easier?
- What rules slow you down or prevent you from doing your best work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule #1.</th>
<th>Kill it? _________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Or modify it? How?</td>
<td>_______________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule #2.</th>
<th>Kill it? _________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Or modify it? How?</td>
<td>_______________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule #3.</th>
<th>Kill it? _________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Or modify it? How?</td>
<td>_______________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Customer/Client Rules

**Consider:**
- What regularly frustrates our clients/customers about us?
- What makes it difficult to do business with us?
- Why do customers/clients choose our competition over us?
- What 1 thing would you immediately change for our clients/customers if you could?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule #1.</th>
<th>Kill it? _________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Or modify it? How?</td>
<td>_______________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule #2.</th>
<th>Kill it? _________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Or modify it? How?</td>
<td>_______________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule #3.</th>
<th>Kill it? _________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Or modify it? How?</td>
<td>_______________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TIP FOR SUCCESS:
• Leaders should respond objectively—not defensively—when members of the group share their lists of stupid rules.

Discuss as a group:
• How many people were able to come up with at least 3 rules? How about 5? 10? Share them now.
• Was it easy to come up with rules to kill or change? Why/why not?
• Was it easier to brainstorm internal or customer/client rules? Why?
• How many of our suggestions are actual corporate rules (vs. assumptions about how things “should” be done)?

STEP 2: PLOT 2 STUPID RULES ON MATRIX
From your worksheets, choose the 2 rules you most want to kill or change and write them on separate sticky notes. Ask yourself the following questions:
• In your opinion, would it be easy or hard to kill the rule?
• In your opinion, would killing this rule have a high impact on your business unit?

Based on your answers to those questions, you should now be able to determine whether killing each rule would have a high impact on the business, low impact, or somewhere in between. Use this knowledge to plot your 2 rules on the large matrix in the room according to how easy to kill and how much its death will impact the business. For example, if you believe your rule is low impact and hard to kill, it should be placed in Quadrant 1 (lower left). If it’s high impact and easy to kill, plot it in Quadrant 4 (top right). There’s no right or wrong placement because you define what goes where according to your own perspective.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:
• Leaders should take note of any rule that appears more than once; this indicates a problem area in the business.
• Participants typically place rules in the top half of the grid, with the majority in top right box. Conversely, the lower right quadrant might be full. Very few rules will be placed in the lower left quadrant, so it’s important to lead an objective discussion about the true impact or ease of implementation.
• Look for rules that appear in the upper-right quadrant of the matrix. These are easy to change with a high business impact, and killing them will give your team a quick win.
STEP 3: EVALUATE + DISCUSS AS A GROUP
Each team member should now share which 2 rules they plotted and why they believe these should be killed or modified. Use the questions below to guide the discussion:

• In which quadrant were most of our rules placed?
• Are there similarities in the types of rules on the matrix? (Mostly related to reports? To HR processes? Etc.?)
• If most of our rules fall in the top right quadrant—easy to implement and high impact—why haven't we discussed eliminating them before now?
• Which rule/s should we kill immediately?
• Which rule/s should we modify immediately?

STEP 4: KILL STUPID RULES
Now it's time for the moment of truth—and action. Among these “rules,” take an employee vote on which one should be killed. Then do it, right on the spot. If possible, kill a few more. (Or do the next best thing: kill a rule for a few months and promise that if no one misses it, the change will be permanent.

Discuss as a group:

• Is anything preventing us from killing more rules?
• If so, what can we do to change that?
• Should we do this exercise a few times a year?
• Do stupid rules tend to originate from a specific business unit or division? What if we invited them to a rule-killing session to jointly explore solutions?
Simplification Tool

Simplification Tactics

Simplification Process:

- 1 – Awareness
- 2 – Identification
- 3 – Prioritization
- 4 – Execution
- 5 – Habit Formation

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WHY THIS TOOL?
Designed to follow the Complexity Diagnostic and precede selection of Simplification Metrics, this tool provides solutions to complexity in every area of your organization. With more than 70 simplification tactics at the ready—from Google’s Bureaucracy Busting sessions to Airbnb’s Meeting-Free-Wednesdays—teams are armed with real-world ways to attack complexity and move your business toward a simplified state.

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:
• Relevant for all levels of staff

SET-UP VARIATIONS:
• Variation #1: Do the exercise individually, skipping STEP 4 (group discussion)
• Variation #2: Do the exercise as a group; break into teams and assign each one an area of the business for which to choose tactics

RECOMMENDED TIMING:
Step 1. Choose at least 3 business areas: 5 mins.
Step 2. Review tactics within business areas: 10 mins.
Step 3. Choose at least 2 tactics per area: 20 – 40 mins.
55 – 95 mins.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

Worksheets (enough for each participant + a few extra)

Colored whiteboard markers and pens (separating ideas by color will help organize your thoughts)

Whiteboard or flipcharts

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STEP 1: CHOOSE AT LEAST 3 BUSINESS AREAS
Refer to your completed Complexity Diagnostic for easy identification of which business areas to focus on. If you haven’t yet used the Diagnostic tool, review the 11 business areas below and circle at least 3 that create the most complexity for you or your team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATIONAL</th>
<th>INDIVIDUAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Vision/Communication</td>
<td>• Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Org. Structure</td>
<td>• Strategy/Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>• HR</td>
<td>• Operational</td>
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<td>• Products/Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Presentations</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Value of Staff Time</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

STEP 2 + 3: REVIEW + CHOOSE AT LEAST 2 TACTICS PER AREA
Read every tactic in your areas of complexity, and check the box beside all the simplification tactics that would be most effective for your organization. Keep big-picture goals in mind as you choose individual tactics. For example, if Strategic Planning is an area of complexity and your goal is to finalize your annual strategic plan more quickly, choose a tactic that supports this goal.

ORGANIZATIONAL AREA:
VISION/COMMUNICATION

☐ Change the language, change the mindset. Communication from senior leadership to employees should be simple and concise. Eliminate jargon and clichés from messaging, and encourage authentic statements that do not need decoding. Simplification—in word and in deed—is key to shifting employees’ mindsets from fear to freedom and from dependence to empowerment.

☐ Give it the kindergarten test. Can you explain your document/presentation/proposal/contract to a 5-year-old? Keep distilling the work until it’s as simplified as possible.

☐ Stop posting everywhere. Take a tip from consulting firm Box of Crayons and focus your social media efforts on the 1 or 2 channels that are most relevant to your business.

HR

☐ Define roles by outcomes, not tasks. Task-based job descriptions focus on processes, not results, so redefine the roles in your organization for outcome-focused measures of success. For example, “write 3-5 press releases per month” could become “generate 20+ press mentions per month.” This approach shifts the focus from “how” to “what.” It flexes employees’ creative problem-solving muscles and empowers them to concentrate on what actually matters: results.

☐ Reduce performance assessment criteria. Healthcare company Abbott reduced the number of assessment items in performance reviews—with a huge impact on the business.

☐ Align each group’s goals with simplification. To embed simplification throughout your entire organization, establish a set of universal metrics (i.e. reduce meetings by 20%; kill at least 10 stupid rules annually, etc.) that apply to every group within the org. structure and keep everyone accountable for simplifying.

☐ Empower direct reports with decision-making. Charge each person on your team to make 2 decisions this week without you. At your next status meeting, discuss which decisions they made on their own. Expand this behavior to 3, 5, and 10+ decisions per week, and tie decision-making to individual performance or to a simplification metric for your department.
Eliminate (or rethink) annual performance reviews. Follow Accenture’s lead and do away with paperwork-heavy performance reviews. Instead of reserving feedback for a once-a-year exercise, managers at this professional services company now provide employees with more frequent and less formal reviews for real-time improvement. Pro tip: Link assessment criteria to strategy so employees understand how their performance impacts the business from a strategic viewpoint.

Use tweet-sized feedback loops. After completing a benchmark event or milestone, send a mini-review to participants requesting Twitter-length answers (140 characters or less) about team or initiative performance, critical skills, and advice on what should be improved next time around.

Re-examine transfer policy. Make the transfer policy work for employees, like the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas did. Staff challenged its rule that employees can’t be transferred to another area of the business prior to 6 months from hire date. Now staff can transfer whenever a talent fit arises.

Shorten employee onboarding. Kill long-winded orientations by offering on-demand learning during an employee’s tenure. Focus orientation on just the basics with a brief Q&A meeting 2-4 weeks after start date, when employees have a better grasp on their responsibilities.

Establish flex/unlimited vacation. Reduce HR and senior staff hours spent managing vacation days by eliminating the need to manage it like delivery service Deliv did. If time off affects an employee’s performance or work quality, empower managers to adjust policy for that individual.

Limit hotel rate, not hotel choices. To give its business-traveling employees more flexibility on hotel price and location, pharmaceutical company Novartis added 40 hotel chains to its travel policy.

Host a Simplification Jam. Like IBM’s Idea Jam, which engages more than 300,000 employees around the world in far-reaching exploration and problem solving, invite your organization (and external stakeholders like customers or clients) to propose ideas for simplifying complex areas of your business.

Reward + recognize simplifiers. Publicly reward employees who make a successful case for killing a project, task, or policy. Positive reinforcement isn’t a new concept, but it has the proven power to spread the value of simplification throughout your business.

Make simplification a mandatory element of strategic planning. For every new strategy that’s added to the annual plan, remove an initiative that was rolled over from last year. Identifying what teams should stop doing in the coming year is just as essential as outlining what they need to start doing.

Finalize annual strategic plan within a quarter (or less). Filing away your strategic plan until next year is just as ineffective as failing to make a plan at all. Put it into action within 90 days to ensure that your company meets its strategic goals.

Keep score. Track your organization’s strategic performance throughout the year with a balanced scorecard or similar system.

Eliminate approval committees by empowering a single expert with the authority to make and move decisions forward according to a set timeframe.

Kill stupid rules like HBO did. When the cable network conducted this exercise for the first time, more than 100 stupid rules were identified and eliminated to free up time and reduce bottlenecking. Through a Google Doc, the group continued suggesting more stupid rules to kill and other parts of the organization adopted the practice. Rule-killing spread organically throughout the company and has become a best practice.
OPERATIONAL (cont.)

☐ Cut the contract clutter. Reduce the length of your contracts from 100 pages to 20, like one of GE’s groups did. Invite legal and business units to a joint session with the goal of reducing the contract length or finding ways to template or streamline the contracts that are most frequently used.

☐ Open an express lane. Stop bottlenecks in your business by announcing that all actionable items meeting established criteria should be given a green light. The only items that do not belong in the express lane are those requiring additional review or approvals.

☐ Stop demanding receipts for items on expense reports that cost less than $75 (or specify the amount that’s right for your business).

☐ Increase discretionary spend limits to minimize forms and constant approvals. Monitor and adjust policy only if necessary.

☐ Set contract pricing minimums/maximums to speed deals. German pharmaceutical company Boehringer-Ingelheim established proposal-pricing minimums and eliminated the need for sign-offs on every proposal. As long as pricing minimums are met, no manager sign-offs are needed so deals move forward faster.

☐ Get outside-in solutions. Pair people together from different areas of your organization to brainstorm solutions to each other’s operational challenges. Fresh eyes and ears can offer a new perspective (instead of 1000 reasons why X doesn’t work or why Z is impossible).

☐ Track down duplicate work. Dialog with other divisions to determine whether any redundant work is being conducted in a silo. If so, decide if that work should be eliminated in one group, centralized, or shared.

☐ Conduct a vendor audit. Review all your current vendor relationships to assess if a decrease in vendors and consolidation of services could reduce your paperwork and/or ensure lower prices.

☐ Channel similar tasks to 1 source. European franchise PizzaExpress shifted the task of slicing cocktail lemons from wait staff to the kitchen, which is more experienced with the duty and completes it more efficiently. By simply changing who sliced lemons, the company saved significant hours, which translated into significant financial savings.

☐ Implement the 1-over-1 rule. Reduce approval layers to 2 signatures—your boss and their boss—like GE did.

PRODUCT/SERVICE

☐ Eliminate or divest like Sprint does. When the telecommunications company recognized that the “Welcome Call” in its marketing program wasn’t adding value to the business, the service was eliminated. With this single decision, Sprint cut $22MM from its operating budget. Review your own offerings regularly (and objectively), and phase out products, services, or projects that waste valuable resources so you can make space for innovation. To incentivize this behavior enterprise-wide, reward people for identifying portfolio areas without strong ROI.

☐ Want breakthrough ideas? Stop asking for them. Trade yawn-inducing prompts like “Who has a big idea for our next new product?” for provocative thought-starters that seem outrageous in theory but are potentially transformative in action. For example, “start a business that competes with my current employer” is an idea that could certainly get you fired. But in the context of this tactic, it can start a valuable conversation about crisis aversion. A competing venture would likely exploit your company’s biggest weakness, opening up discussion about what can be done now to transform flaws into strengths. Review the list below for thought-starters.

• If you were guaranteed immunity, what are some ideas that would get you fired?
• Name 3 free solutions to this problem.
• Name 3 solutions that wouldn’t require any time investment.
• What ideas do you have that would give the CEO a panic attack?
• What would our competitors never expect us to do?
• Name 3 small changes that you would love to implement today.
• What 1 thing would you change to solve this problem?
Keep it simple like Google does. Ranked one of the top companies in the world on the Global Brand Simplicity Index, Google intentionally keeps the features of its search engine—and every other offering—as minimal as possible for its users.

Kill stupid meetings like Sprint did. Upon review of every meeting held in 1 year—from standing and weekly status meetings to events, off-sites, and team gatherings—Sprint eliminated 30% of them. Conduct your own meeting audit and do away with meetings that don’t add value or have outlived their original objective.

Just say no. After performing a meeting audit to determine the cost of time and resources for all of its meetings, professional services company Accenture empowered its managers to decline meetings without guilt or fear.

Institute Meeting-Free Wednesdays like Airbnb did to encourage uninterrupted time for valuable work.

On your feet. Stand-up meetings are less comfortable for attendees, which typically reduces the meeting’s length.

Set a timer. Place a cap on meetings like HBO’s division for Domestic Network Distribution did. A designated timekeeper limits meetings to 1 hour, which keeps sessions focused and mindful of attendees’ time.

Rethink default modes. Adjust your Outlook or iCal default settings from 1 hour to 30 mins. for new events. Manually adjust only if a meeting will require more than 30 mins. to achieve its goal.

Start meetings with goals…and end with action items. Require that every meeting agenda includes the meeting’s goal and is sent to invitees in advance. Similarly, require that next steps be defined at the meeting’s conclusion.

Establish meeting etiquette and post it on your intranet and in conference rooms to encourage efficiency, punctuality, and preparedness among attendees.

Simplify meeting materials. By limiting preparation for quarterly financial meetings to 1 – 2 PPT slides, Novartis shortened both the length of these meetings and advance prep time for every level of staff.

End meetings 15 minutes before the hour. Standardize the 45-min. meeting, enabling employees to make their next meeting or call in a timely manner.

Institute email-free time zones. UK-based multimedia production company Ten Alps banned morning emails so employees could allocate time for ideating and imagining instead of inboxing.

Unsubscribe to every e-letter that adds zero value to your life.

Enact email quotas. In organizations where email is overwhelming, an employee may receive more than 200 emails in a single day. Extreme simplification measures call for a daily email quota—starting with yourself—that limits sending or replying to a maximum of 20-30 emails per day. Once that quota is met, your inbox is closed for the day. From this level of simplification, an organization-wide awareness of what’s being sent and received is gained, and over time, excessive emailing habits are curbed.

Limit cc recipients to 3 people inside your company, which is how Ferrari got its employees to “talk more, write less.”

Use Slack or WhatsApp messaging to decrease the volume of internal emails.

Utilize NNTR. For email topics that are FYI and don’t require a response, type NNTR (No Need To Respond) in the subject line. By utilizing this tactic, a business unit at Merck reduced email volume within its group by 20%.
**EMAIL/CALLS/VOICEMAIL (cont.)**

- **Reply to non-urgent emails at a slow or set time** of day.

- **Distill your message into the subject line** and leave the email body blank.

- **Pick up the phone** to resolve any topic that isn't decided after 3 emails.

- **No-scroll emails.** Summarize key points or action items for recipients in the body of your email. Lengthy or dense information should be relegated to attachments only.

- **Eliminate voicemail** like Coca-Cola and JPMorgan Chase did. By cutting an outmoded means of communication for the majority of its staff—client-facing teams chose to retain it—JPMorgan Chase saved more than $8MM.

- **Limit internal calls to 12 mins., 25 mins., or 50 mins.** Benefits of untraditional end times include more time awareness and fewer tangents. Calls of these lengths are designed to provide buffer time afterward to handle any action items requested during the calls.

- **Embrace airplane mode.** To focus on valuable work, place your smartphone in airplane mode, move it into a drawer, and check your messages only once per hour.

- **Shift weekly calls to bimonthly.** HBO’s division for Domestic Network Distribution modified the frequency of its weekly touch point calls for senior leadership to bimonthly, saving time and increasing the quality of information exchanged.

**REPORTS**

- **Crowd-source the complexity.** Are reports your No. 1 cause for complexity? Crowd-source solutions to the issue and implement these ideas. Publicly recognize and reward employees with winning ideas to incentivize more simplification.

**PRESENTATIONS**

- **3 core ideas only.** Research suggests that audiences only remember 3 points from any presentation they encounter, so save time by distilling your work into 3 core ideas and building your narrative or CTA around them.

- **No PPT meetings.** By allowing only 1-page executive summaries, individuals are pushed to provide only the most essential information.

- **Utilize Google Docs** for finalizing presentations and proposals among multiple authors/stakeholders.

- **Use simple formatting and fewer graphics.** Reduce time investment—and staff headaches—for presentations by limiting graphics to 1 per page and avoiding custom colors and fonts.

**VALUE OF STAFF TIME**

- **Hold simplifying sessions.** Host a formal exercise (like Killing Complexity) where team members are invited to identify tasks that are complex or don’t add value to the business. Along with participants, leaders help brainstorm ideas on how to eliminate, outsource, or simplify these tasks in the session.

- **Equip managers with outcome-focused solutions.** Train managers to resolve gripe sessions by asking “What do you hope to achieve through this dialog?” This tactic redirects a conversation from “My colleague always gets first choice when choosing holidays” to “I want to pin down my summer holidays, and I need you to review my request this week so I can plan my vacation.” By encouraging employees to phrase their complaints as wishes, an issue like “I hate the new hire process” becomes “I wish the new hire process included only 1 level of approval and could be done in 3 days or less.”
VALUE OF STAFF TIME (cont.)

☐ Morning priorities = better choices all day. When you make a conscious effort each morning to focus on specific goals, your afternoon is less likely to be derailed by distractions or unplanned matters.

☐ Put valuable work on the calendar. Reserve 2-3 hours each day for work that is most valuable to your stakeholders.

☐ Eliminate 1 current activity before adding a new one. This golden rule of simplification emphasizes respect of employees’ time and thoughtful examination of existing responsibilities.

☐ Cut the crap by committee. U.K.-based audio retailer Richer Sounds founded a Cut-the-Crap Committee, where managers reduce bureaucracy by limiting unproductive systems and paperwork.

☐ Turn Fridays into Finishdays. Designate Friday afternoons for wrapping up the week’s unfinished business.

☐ Introduce blackout periods. To encourage employees to spend time thinking and ideating instead of attending meetings or answering emails, a department at Fidelity wraps CAUTION tape around their cubicles at designated times each week, and Intel implements dark periods from 1–5 pm on Fridays.

☐ Hold Bureaucracy Buster sessions like Google does. Participants are given the freedom to identify and eradicate barriers to productivity and efficiency.

☐ Who benefits from this process? Before simplifying a process or procedure, break it down into steps and identify who benefits from the information. If the answer is consistently “no one,” eliminate it altogether.

☐ Replace a main process with its workaround. If staff has created a workaround to speed a certain process, consider making it the new protocol. Define your criteria for what constitutes a better solution—X amount of time saved? Y amount of money saved?—and implore employees to find workarounds for other complex processes.

STEP 4: PROPOSAL OF TACTICS + GROUP DISCUSSION
As a group, discuss the following:
1. Which tactics did everyone select? Do we agree on which tactics should be implemented?
2. Will each of our tactics have a high impact on our areas of complexity?
3. Do our tactics directly connect to our goals? If so, write in tactics for each area below. If not, keep discussing until tactics are aligned with goals.

COMPLEXITY AREA #1: ________________________________
Tactic #1. ________________________________
Tactic #2. ________________________________
Tactic #3. ________________________________
Tactic #4. ________________________________
Tactic #5. ________________________________
STEP 4 (CONT.)

COMPLEXITY AREA #2: ____________________________
Tactic #1. ________________________________________
Tactic #2. ________________________________________
Tactic #3. ________________________________________
Tactic #4. ________________________________________
Tactic #5. ________________________________________

COMPLEXITY AREA #3: ____________________________
Tactic #1. ________________________________________
Tactic #2. ________________________________________
Tactic #3. ________________________________________
Tactic #4. ________________________________________
Tactic #5. ________________________________________

COMPLEXITY AREA #4: ____________________________
Tactic #1. ________________________________________
Tactic #2. ________________________________________
Tactic #3. ________________________________________
Tactic #4. ________________________________________
Tactic #5. ________________________________________

SOURCES

Deliv unlimited vacation policy: futurethink interview with CEO Daphne Carmeli
IBM Idea Jam: https://www.collaborationjam.com/
Richer Sounds: http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/205590
Google: http://www.hrzone.com/talent/acquisition/google-innovation
Airbnb: Employee contribution
Ferrari: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/04/ferrari-puts-brakes-staff-emails
Simplification Tool

Simplification Metrics

Simplification Process:
1. Awareness
2. Identification
3. Prioritization
4. Execution
5. Habit Formation
WHY THIS TOOL?
Since we can monitor only what we measure, this tool is designed to track results of your Simplification Tactics across the business. Trackable metrics can be hard and quantifiable, or soft and qualitative, but each one should focus on a part of your business that needs to be simplified. From a reduction in reports or hiring layers to an increase in employee retention, the right metrics will support your business goals and encourage positive behavioral change. An essential exercise in this program, Simplification Metrics will serve as your guidepost (and ideally, proof of your simplification success).

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:  
• Relevant for leaders, teams, and/or business units

SET-UP:  
• Assign a scribe to capture discussion on whiteboard or flipchart in meeting

RECOMMENDED TIMING:
Step 1. Identify + discuss simplification objectives:  
Step 2. Select simplification metrics:  
Step 3. Discuss proposed metrics:  
Step 4. Establish baseline,* goals, + timing:  

*Research may be required

110 – 150 mins.

MATERIALS:
Worksheets (e-mailed or provided to each participant in meeting)  
Colored whiteboard markers (separating ideas by color will help organize your thoughts)  
Whiteboard or flipcharts
STEP 1: IDENTIFY + DISCUSS SIMPLIFICATION OBJECTIVES

As a group, use the following questions to discuss your objectives for simplification and the types of metrics that will enable you to track your simplification efforts.

- In which areas of our business will simplifying have the biggest impact?

- Which key processes and systems should be simplified to create that impact?

- What short-term changes will achieve the quick wins we need to gain momentum for simplification?

- What long-term changes do we expect to accomplish through simplification?

- Which behaviors inside our organization need to change? Which simplification behaviors should become habitual?

- What types of results will indicate that we’ve reached our simplification goals?

- How will we make our selection and monitoring of metrics visible to everyone in the organization?
STEP 2: SELECT SIMPLIFICATION METRICS

Refer to your completed Complexity Diagnostic for business areas and habits that are bottlenecking your business. From the metrics in this tool, choose 5-7—a manageable sweet spot—to track across your business, and feel free to create custom metrics in the blank spaces provided. Keep the following in mind:

- **Connect metrics to your organization’s overall strategy.** Choose metrics that benefit both your business unit and the entire company.
- **Be mindful of unintended consequences.** If you want to track “amount of cost savings from eliminated meetings,” make sure that metric doesn’t push people to blindly eliminate as many meetings as possible. For example, an existing daily huddle for a project team may be preventing redundancies and increasing workflow. Eliminating a valuable meeting like this could end up costing the organization money, so communicate objectives along with metrics. Consider customizing any metric (i.e. track cost savings by eliminating long meetings) with the potential for negative side effects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISION/COMMUNICATION METRICS</th>
<th>ORG. STRUCTURE METRICS</th>
<th>HR METRICS</th>
<th>STRATEGY/PLANNING METRICS</th>
<th>OPERATIONAL METRICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in time spent communicating on irrelevant social media channels</td>
<td>Increase in staff decision-making due to simplified org. structure</td>
<td>Decrease in number of approval layers for hiring qualified candidates</td>
<td>Decrease in number of approval committees</td>
<td>Number of contracts shortened</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decrease in number of jargon statements in communication from senior leaders to employees</td>
<td>Increased communication between teams or divisions due to simplified org. structure</td>
<td>Decrease in number of performance assessment criteria</td>
<td>Amount of time saved from decreasing number of approval committees</td>
<td>Amount of time saved through shortened contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in conversations about elimination and simplification among senior management</td>
<td>Increased sense of empowerment among employees due to simplified org. structure</td>
<td>Amount of time saved from reducing performance assessment criteria</td>
<td>Decrease in amount of time to finalize and approve annual strategic plan</td>
<td>Decrease in employee help-desk requests for basic troubleshooting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in staff comprehension of why simplification is valuable to the business</td>
<td>Increase in number of bonuses or rewards administered for simplifying</td>
<td>Decrease in amount of time to finalize and approve annual fiscal budget</td>
<td>Increase in time employees now spend interacting with clients/customers</td>
<td>Decrease in time to process requests or approvals from employees or customers</td>
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### Simplification Tool

#### Simplification Metrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT/SERVICE METRICS</th>
<th>MEETINGS METRICS</th>
<th>EMAIL/CALLS/VOICEMAIL METRICS</th>
<th>REPORT METRICS</th>
<th>PRESENTATION METRICS</th>
<th>VALUE OF STAFF TIME METRICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of steps or layers removed from our product-development process</td>
<td>Number of meetings eliminated</td>
<td>Decrease in total volume of internal emails</td>
<td>Number of reports killed</td>
<td>Amount of time saved by eliminating PPTs from internal meetings</td>
<td>Number of activities eliminated to make room for new ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in number of steps to access or interact with customers</td>
<td>Decrease in amount of time employees spend in meetings</td>
<td>Amount of time saved from decreasing internal calls to 12 mins., 25 mins. or 50 mins.</td>
<td>Amount of time saved from eliminating unnecessary reports</td>
<td>Amount of time saved from implementation of Google docs or other collaboration tools</td>
<td>Increase in productivity due to establishing black-out periods for uninterrupted ideation time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of underperforming projects eliminated from development pipeline</td>
<td>Amount of cost savings from eliminated meetings</td>
<td>Amount of time saved from limiting cc's on internal emails</td>
<td>Reduction in number of reports reviewed in decision-making process</td>
<td>Amount of time saved from using simple formatting and fewer graphics in presentations</td>
<td>Amount of time saved from channeling similar tasks to 1 source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in customer concerns about our products, services, or website</td>
<td>Amount of time saved from simplifying materials for internal meetings</td>
<td>Amount of money saved from eliminating voicemail</td>
<td>Reduction in duplicate information gathered for reports</td>
<td></td>
<td>Amount of money saved from channeling similar tasks to 1 source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in time to market for new products/services</td>
<td>Decrease in overall volume of internal meeting invitations</td>
<td>Amount of time saved by shifting weekly calls to bimonthly</td>
<td>Amount of time saved from reducing duplicate work for reports</td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of tasks eliminated through simplifying sessions or bureaucracy busters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of products, services, or SKUs phased out</td>
<td>Increase in number of people declining meeting invitations</td>
<td>Increase in productivity due to establishing email-free time zones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amount of time saved on tasks eliminated in simplifying sessions or bureaucracy busters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in positive feedback from customers or clients</td>
<td>Increase in conversations and comfort levels around eliminating meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Employees appear less overwhelmed by their workload</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STEP 3: DISCUSS PROPOSED METRICS

Discuss the following as a group:

- Which 5-7 metrics did each of us choose?

- Which of these metrics address our objectives for quick wins, long-term changes, or behavior shifts?

- Are we in consensus about our 5-7 metrics? (If not, take a team vote.)
## STEP 4: ESTABLISH BASELINE, GOALS, + TIMING

A current baseline is required to track the progress for each simplification metric. If “number of reports killed” is one of your metrics and your business unit currently generates 30 reports a year, then 30 is your baseline. (Additional research may be needed to complete this step.) As you establish goals and timing, be realistic. You want to motivate teams—not set people up for failure—so share goals and timelines across the organization, and be open to feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUR METRICS</th>
<th>CURRENT BASELINE (Where does it stand today?)</th>
<th>GOAL (Where do we want it to be?)</th>
<th>TIMING (When should we achieve this?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Decrease in amount of time spent in meetings.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>One year from now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Decrease in number of approval layers for hiring qualified candidates.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 approval layer below director level; 2 for levels above.</td>
<td>Immediately.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Test your metrics. Do employees actually understand the metrics, the goals, and their individual role in tracking simplification? Pilot test your metrics with a small group before your formal rollout and make adjustments, if necessary.

Designate trackers. Avoid underreporting by channeling data for each metric back to 1 source, and communicating who’s responsible for tracking what.

Evolve your metrics. Check in with your metrics. If your goals were easily achieved with time to spare, be more ambitious with the goal itself or its timing.

Stay informed. Package a 1-sheet of your current metrics for senior leaders at every quarterly meeting. By providing data that is succinctly organized, leadership can easily make decisions that guide simplification in real time.
Simplification Tool

Simplification

Code of Conduct

Simplification Process:

☐ 1 – Awareness
☒ 2 – Identification
☐ 3 – Prioritization
☐ 4 – Execution
☒ 5 – Habit Formation

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WHY THIS TOOL?
Building on your Simplicity Vision Statement, this tool enables you to communicate the simplification behaviors and choices that should be embraced by your organization. It also identifies which behaviors should be avoided to reduce unnecessary work and respect the value of each other’s time. Your organization’s Simplification Code of Conduct empowers employees to question areas of complexity in their own work, as well as others. By the end of this exercise, you’ll create and distribute a Simplification Code of Conduct that every member of your organization is encouraged to endorse.

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:  • Relevant for senior leaders and/or simplification team

RECOMMENDED TIMING:

Step 1. Answer Code of Conduct questions: 15 mins.
Step 3. Finalize + share with organization: 15 mins.

60 mins.

Variation: Exercise can be conducted individually or as a group.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

Worksheets (enough for each participant + a few extra)
Colored whiteboard markers and pens (separating ideas by color will help organize your thoughts)
Whiteboard or flipcharts
STEP 1: ANSWER CODE OF CONDUCT QUESTIONS

Answer the questions below with statements that are short and specific, focusing on the behaviors and habits you want to transform. If conducting this exercise as a group, answer these questions collectively.

1. Which simplification behaviors should people in our organization employ on a daily basis?

2. Which behaviors add unnecessary work and should be avoided from this day forward?

3. What prevents people in our organization from simplifying? What change can we make to remove these obstacles?

4. Starting today, which specific tasks should people in our organization do less of?
STEP 2: DRAFT SIMPLIFICATION CODE OF CONDUCT

Use the example on the next page and your answers above to draft your organization’s Simplification Code of Conduct below. Pro tip: Avoid 2-part statements like “If X, then Y” or “I will do X unless Y.”

I commit to simplifying everything I do. This means I will:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

STEP 3: FINALIZE + SHARE WITH ORGANIZATION

Once you’ve finalized your Simplification Code of Conduct, share it with the organization along with a short, personal message about why simplification is essential to the company’s overall health and happiness. Urge recipients to sign, date, and display the Code as a unifying reminder of everyone’s long-term approach to daily work.
(Sample)

Simplification Code of Conduct

I commit to simplifying everything I do.

This means I will:

1. Eliminate redundancies and unnecessary work – and empower my team to do the same.
2. Not create false urgency.
3. Push back if I think something is unnecessary.
4. Use clear, jargon-free language when I communicate.
5. Keep my emails, documents, meetings, and conversations short.
6. Be decisive and limit the amount of information I need to make a decision.
7. Empower others to make decisions without me.
8. Make information available to others (unless illegal).
9. Say NO whenever possible.
Simplification Tool

Interview Questions for Hiring Simplifiers

Simplification Process:

1 – Awareness
2 – Identification
3 – Prioritization
4 – Execution
5 – Habit Formation

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WHY THIS TOOL?

The potential for simplification in your company increases when employees at all levels demonstrate the capacity for simplification. Whether your organization has embraced a simplification program or is taking first steps toward one, this tool is a litmus test for identifying simplifiers among your hiring pool. Is it possible to recognize a simplifier during a first interview? Absolutely—when you’re armed with these 30+ questions.

HOW IT WORKS

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:  
• Relevant for managers + leaders who hire talent

RECOMMENDED TIMING:

Step 1. Choose 10-15 relevant hiring questions:  
30 mins.

Step 2. Incorporate questions into hiring process:  
45 mins.

75 mins.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS:

Worksheets
(printed in advance of interview)
STEP 1: CHOOSE 10-15 RELEVANT HIRING QUESTIONS

Review all 34 questions and check the box beside the questions that specifically address behaviors that you want to encourage in your business. If empowering employees to challenge complexity is a goal, choose an EXECUTION question like “When you experience resistance to your simplification efforts, how do you respond?” If you need employees who recognize and eradicate complexity in their daily work, choose an IDENTIFICATION question like “What would make it easier for you to do your current or previous job?” Feel free to add custom questions in the blank spaces provided.

AWARENESS

☐ Can you name an individual who has successfully simplified a complex business or industry?

☐ Which company or individual is the portrait of simplicity? What about complexity?

☐ In your opinion, what are the major causes of organizational complexity?

☐ How do you know if you’re working in a simplicity-centric organization?

☐ What are the characteristics of a simplicity-focused organization?

IDENTIFICATION

☐ Can you name a few red-flag indicators of complexity?

☐ If you were put in charge of our simplification efforts, where would you start?

☐ In your opinion, where does complexity typically live in an organization? Why?

☐ Can you name a situation in which you encountered excessive complexity and nobody else recognized it?

☐ What gets in the way of accomplishing your workplace goals?

☐ What is the most basic issue that interferes with your job performance?

☐ What would make it easier to do your current or previous job?

☐ In the last month, were you asked to do any work that proved to be a total waste of time? What do you wish you would’ve done or said to avoid it?
If your colleague is performing a task that doesn’t add value to the business, do you speak up? Why or why not?

Can you remember a situation where it was evident that your team or organization had a complexity problem? How did you resolve it?

What sorts of reasons do people use as an excuse for not simplifying things that are unnecessarily complicated?

PRIORITIZATION

If you could do 1 thing at your previous or current company to instantly simplify your work, what would it be?

What 2 time-suck tasks would you eradicate from your previous or current job? Why these tasks?

Can you share an example when you were frustrated by a company that made things purposefully complicated?

We’re redesigning our company’s website to reflect a simplified approach. Which current elements would you eliminate to achieve this?

In 140 characters or less, what would you tweet to persuade us that you’re a simplifier who should be offered this job?

EXECUTION

Can you share an example of a successful workaround you created to simplify a frustrating process or system? Was it adopted as the new protocol?

When you encounter an individual who makes things needlessly complex, how do you respond?

How would you measure simplicity in an organization?

What circumstances are optimal for achieving simplicity?

Would you rather construct a new, simple product/service from scratch or simplify a current product/service that’s plagued with complexity?
Simplification Tool
Interview Questions for Hiring Simplifiers

☐ Can you share a situation—either in your personal or professional life—where you were utterly overwhelmed by complexity and found a way to simplify things?

☐ In your opinion, what prevents people with unnecessarily complicated schedules from simplifying and freeing up their time?

☐ When you experience resistance to your simplification efforts, how do you respond?

☐ From the existing job description for this role, which 3 objectives should we cut and why?

__________________________________________________________________________

HABIT FORMATION

☐ In your opinion, what individual behaviors contribute to simplification?

☐ What are the managerial habits or behaviors that contribute to complexity? How could these be modified?

☐ When you encounter an inefficient policy or process, do you offer to find a better solution?

☐ If hired, what are a few ways you might make simplification a habit within your group?

__________________________________________________________________________

STEP 2: INCORPORATE QUESTIONS INTO HIRING PROCESS

During interviews, look for examples of the candidates’ approach to simplification in their answers. True simplifiers can easily and passionately explain their philosophy, and share stories about a process or task that they proudly streamlined or eliminated. They’re honest about the resistance they faced along the way, and can offer detailed, firsthand accounts of their experience.

Conversely, beware of candidates who generalize or toss around business jargon in lieu of specifics. If you hear language about “minimizing bureaucracy” or “getting rid of red tape” without personal examples, you’re likely interviewing a status-quo complexifier. If the only anecdotes they can share are business news stories or second-hand descriptions of simplicity in action, that’s also a red flag.

By utilizing the hiring questions in this tool—and hopefully adding a few of your own—you’ll increase the chance of hiring your next simplifier, instead of another complexifier.
Simplification Process:

1. Awareness
2. Identification
3. Prioritization
4. Execution
5. Habit Formation
**WHY THIS TOOL?**

From best-selling books on mindfulness to proven time-saving apps, we’ve gathered the winners into a single source.

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<th>RESOURCES</th>
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</table>
| Work    | Apps | - Dropbox – store, share, sync, + collaborate across multiple devices.  
- Klok – time-keeper app tracks your day and billable hours.  
- MailWise – emails from multiple accounts arranged into a messaging-style user interface.  
- MobileDay – fast, easily accessible anywhere conference call service.  
- Slack – replaces email with 21st-century messaging for teams.  
- Spark – auto-organizes incoming emails on your smartphone for at-a-glance management.  
- Sunrise – Outlook’s social-savvy cousin, this calendar app integrates with Facebook, Evernote, GoogleMaps, Meetup, and more.  
- Wunderlist – super-charge your to-do list across multiple devices. |
|         |      | - Quick and Dirty Tips to Work Less and Do More – weekly tips for working smarter from Get-It-Done Guy  
- HBR IdeaCast – weekly interviews with business and thought leaders from Harvard Business Review (HBR) |
|         |      | - TEDXSiliconAlley – Ad man Ken Segall, who named the iMac and created Apple’s Think Different campaign, breaks down “The Simplicity Principle.”  
- TEDXO’Porto – Activist Sandra Fisher articulates how overly complex language separates people from information in “The Right to Understand.”  
- TED@BCG – Corporate-transformation expert Yves Morieux lays out smart rules for fighting complexity in “As Work Gets More Complex, 6 Rules to Simplify.”  
- TEDXNormal – Entrepreneur and author Lisa Bodell demonstrates why more thinking and less emailing can lead to valuable work in “How Simplification is the Key to Change.” |
|         |      | - “Businesses are Hanging up on Voice Mail to Dial in Productivity” (National Public Radio)  
- “Complexity Kills (So Kill Complexity)” (Forbes)  
- “Google Innovation” (HRZone)  
- “Italy: Company Trials Email-Free Working to Cut Stress” (BBC)  
- “New Research Published: How to Innovate through Standardization” (Gartner Blog)  
- “Putting Organizational Complexity in its Place” (McKinsey)  
- “Richard Branson: 3 Rules of Simplicity that Every Business Should Follow” (Virgin)  
- “Simplicity-Minded Management” (Schaffer Consulting)  
- “Surprising, Disturbing Facts from the Mother of all Employee Engagement Surveys” (Forbes)  
- “These 13 Lucky Jerks Ditched Email for a Week, for Science” (New York Magazine)  
- “These Companies Have the Best (And Worst) Privacy Policies” (Time)  
- “The Simplicity Revolution in Banking” (The Financial Brand)  
- “Simplification of Work: The Coming Revolution” (Deloitte University Press) |
|         |      | - 4 Seconds: All the Time You Need to Stop Counter-Productive Habits and Get the Results You Want by Peter Bregman  
- Don’t Make Me Think, Revisited by Steve Krug (excerpt)  
- Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity by David Allen |
### Simplification Tool
### Simplification Resources

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</thead>
</table>
| **Work (cont.)** | Books | - *Mind Hacking: How to Change Your Mind for Good in 21 Days* by John Hargrave  
- *Simple: Conquering the Crisis of Complexity* by Alan Siegel and Irene Etzkor  
- *Simple Rules: How to Thrive in a Complex World* by Donald Sull, Kathleen M. Eisenhardt and Jeff Cummings  
- *Simply Effective* by Ron Ashkenas |
| **Personal** | Apps | - 24me – intelligently pulls your daily tasks from external sources, sets reminders for completion, and enables you to outsource chores to TaskRabbit.  
- Coach.me – habit-building tool with purchase option for motivational-coach services.  
- Cozi – family-centered app manages household meal-planning, scheduling, and immunizations through a shared calendar and message board.  
- Evernote – cloud-based productivity tool that can be used to record meetings, mark up PDFs, and, of course, note-taking.  
- Keeper – securely stores log-in info and passwords for all accounts.  
- Level Money – links up with financial accounts to provide a real-time “spendable” balance for the day, week, and month.  
- Short Reckonings – manage shared expenses with friends and family members, and keep track of debts.  
- Triplt – auto-generates travel itineraries from emailed travel confirmations, and includes maps of destinations and airport terminals.  
- Workflow – shortens the usual number of smartphone steps for scheduling an appointment, creating a GIF, deleting multiple screenshots, and more. |
| | Websites + Blogs | - BugMeNot – bypass account creation by instantly borrowing user log-ins to thousands of websites.  
- Instructables – instructions on everything from home repairs to making a bass fiddle or a solar-charged backpack.  
- Lifehack – hundreds of thousands of user-generated tricks for getting anything done more efficiently and effectively.  
- Memrise – uses brain science, gaming, and bite-size learning to make learning more accessible.  
- Stickk – goal-setting platform uses incentives and accountability to increase users’ chances of success. |
| | Videos | - TEDXStGeorge – Author and blogger Jennifer L. Scott reveals how owning fewer clothes can improve style and quality of life in “The 10-Item Wardrobe.”  
- TEDXBoulder – Entrepreneur Kim Coupounas makes the case for responsible consumption and spending in “The Joy of Less.”  
- RSAReplay – Author and futurist James Wallman explains how paring down possessions can lead to a richer life in “Why We’ve Had Enough of Stuff.” |
| | News | - “12 Ways You Can Find Success by Keeping Things Simple” (Inc.)  
- “A Year of Living Without” (Zen Habits)  
- “Simplicity is the Key to Creativity” (The Guardian)  
- “Simplification is a Beautiful Thing: How to Simplify Your Business and Life” (Huffington Post) |
## Simplification Resources

### Personal (cont.)

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</thead>
</table>
|               | Books      | • **The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing**  
by Marie Kondo  
• **The Small Big: Small Changes That Spark Big Influence** by Robert B. Cialdini, Noah  
Goldstein, and Steve J. Martin |

### Mindfulness

<table>
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</table>
|               | Apps       | • **Calm** – tranquil sounds of nature and an optional timer for daily quieting of the mind.  
• **Coffitivity** – background sounds of a coffee shop for those who prefer urban white noise  
to nature.  
• **Daily Yoga** – body and mind-stretching instructional training for all.  
• **Focus@Will** – boost focus and productivity using phrase-sequenced, neuroscience-based  
music.  
• **Headspace** – hundreds of exercises for meditation and mood therapy, plus a progress  
tracker. |
|               | Websites + Blogs | • **3-Minute Journal** – track accomplishments and emotional state, and mark moments of  
gratitude.  
• **750 Words** – join a community committed to writing 3 uncensored pages each morning to  
clear the mind and make space for idea-flow all day.  
• **Do Nothing For 2 Minutes** – take a Zen break amid the sounds of the sea. Rinse and repeat  
as needed.  
• **RainyMood** – endless loop of steady rain and thunder offer a soundtrack for deep focus.  
• **SimplyNoise** – white or color noise player use sound frequencies to block distractions and  
reduce stress. |
|               | Videos     | • TED Salon London: Mindfulness and meditation expert Andy Puddicombe explains the  
benefits of making mindfulness a daily habit in “All It Takes is 10 Mindful Minutes.”  
• TEDX Whitefish: Best-selling authors Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus (a.k.a.  
The Minimalists) share the value of community and a simpler life in “A Rich Life with Less  
Stuff.”  
• **Essays**  
• **Podcast Series** |
|               | News       | • “**Simplify Now: The 10 Obstacles To Radical Simplification**” (Mindfulfitness Movement)  
• “**Why Simplicity Is So Complex**” (Fast Company) |
|               | Books      | • **Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less** by Greg McKeown  
• **Mindful Leadership: The 9 Ways to Self-Awareness, Transforming Yourself, and Inspiring  
Others** by Maria Gonzalez  
• **Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace In a Frantic World** by Mark Williams  
and Danny Penman |
We love hearing from people who are passionate about simplifying.

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