

# TED Talks to help make work *work*

 By [Sandy Peters](#)

18 Dec 2014

Here are a few 'ideas worth spreading' that put a spin on the traditional work environment. Hopefully they inspire you to apply or drive change in your 9-5er. Maybe all you need is a new outlook on work; maybe it's your manager who does...

## Why work doesn't happen at work

It's ironic that great work rarely happens at work, but it's hardly surprising given the modern office environment. According to [Jason Fried](#), co-founder and president of 37signals, in his experience, most people go anywhere but the office in order to really get work done. So why doesn't work happen at work? Fried believes the problem lies with meetings and managers - the ultimate sources of involuntary distractions. Fear not, he has great solutions; you've just got to have a manager who's open to change.

*"Giving someone four hours of uninterrupted time is the best gift you can give anybody at work." - Fried*

## Got a meeting? Take a walk

We're sitting more than we're sleeping and there's a whole lot of health risks that come with being so sedentary. [Nilofer Merchant, corporate director and author](#), has found a social solution that's easy enough to implement: walking meetings. In order to drive fresh thinking you need fresh air, and to think out of the box, you literally need to get out of the box.

*"Sitting has become the smoking of our generation." - Merchant*

## **What makes us feel good about our work?**

[Dan Ariely](#), behavioural economist, believes that in today's knowledge economy, meaning trumps efficiency when it comes to labour. Motivation in the workplace goes beyond payment. We need to take various other drivers into consideration, such as meaning, ownership and stimulation. Through various experiments, his research has revealed much about eliminating negative motivation, and getting people to love what they do.

*"Ignoring the performance of people is almost as bad as shredding their effort in front of their eyes." - Ariely*

## **How to make work-life balance work**

The holy grail of your career should be attaining work-life balance. [Nigel Marsh](#), author and marketer, strives for this and gives others a starting point from which to do so. He boldly states that a jeans and T-shirt day just doesn't cut it. All companies - yes, all - are designed to get the most out of you, every individual needs to take charge of their own lives and create boundaries. The key is to be realistic and focus on the small things to transform the quality of your life and your relationships.

*"If you don't design your life, someone else will design it for you and you may just not like their idea of balance." - Marsh*

## The puzzle of motivation

Career analyst [Dan Pink](#) presents a "lawyerly case" for rethinking the incentive model in business. He emphasises that there is a mismatch between what science knows and what business does. In the 21st century, incentives for creative, conceptual work either don't work or do harm, says Pink. Motivation needs to be intrinsic by promoting autonomy, mastery and purpose. An interesting takeaway is that the management approach to business may not work forever.

*"Too many organisations are making their decisions, their policies about talent and people, based on assumptions that are outdated, unexamined, and rooted more in folklore than in science." - Pink*

## ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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