

# MAKE WORK WORK FOR YOU



**27 Leadership Practices to Achieve  
Excellence across Performance,  
Growth and Wellbeing**



**LOUISE GILBERT**



## **Praise for *Make Work Work for You***

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### **A game-changer for anyone looking to thrive at work!**

This book couldn't have come at a better time. It's full of practical insights that resonate deeply with today's work culture. It's all about finding a balance between personal well-being and professional success—something we're all trying to master.

Louise brings a unique focus on combining performance, growth, and well-being, making it essential reading for CEOs, founders, and leaders. It's a funny, insightful, and very relatable read! Highly recommended for anyone who wants to rethink their relationship with work.

**CHAD STEPHENS**, 2x Exited Founder, Startup Advisor and Angel Investor

### **Bridging the gap between research and reality**

As a work-life researcher, I'm constantly seeking insights that resonate both intellectually and emotionally. Louise Gilbert's *Make Work Work for You* delivers exactly that. The relatable anecdotes, like the overwhelmed leader who unknowingly perpetuated a culture of dependency, hit home and highlight the often-unseen dynamics that shape our workplaces. The 'Three Pedals of Excellence' model provides a practical framework for achieving sustainable success, reminding us that it's not about work or life, but rather work and life in harmony. This book is a must-read for anyone seeking to create a fulfilling and balanced life, both personally and professionally.

**CARYS CHAN**, Senior Lecturer, Griffith University

## **A terrific read, full of great ideas**

Louise Gilbert's *Make Work Work for You*, hits the nail on the head—having the right culture is fundamental to achieving high performance.

The book challenges us to think to create intentional environments to foster the culture we want. I particularly love the idea of organising 'f\*\*\*ed-up nights.'

As a CEO, I have always tried to foster a 'no-blame' and 'safe-to-fail' culture, but I had never thought of hosting 'f\*\*\*ed-up nights'!!

Overall, a terrific read—full of great ideas—highly recommend.

**PHILLIP RIPPER**, CEO, No to Violence

## **Authentic and caring leadership**

Louise's book couldn't have come at a better time. *Make Work Work for You* speaks to the heart of what it means to lead with authenticity and care. Louise's practical advice on balancing performance, growth, and wellbeing feels like a breath of fresh air. It's not just about achieving success at work but about showing up as our true, healthy selves every day. This guide is more than just a tool—it's a genuine support for leaders who want to navigate the challenges of today's workplace with both strength and heart. Thank you for addressing such a crucial need, Louise.

**JAMES LOLICATO**, Chief Operating Officer, Mancave

## **Transformative insights for modern leadership**

Louise Gilbert's *Make Work Work for You* is a game-changer for anyone striving to redefine their work experience. This book not only provides a fresh perspective on work but also equips you with actionable strategies to elevate your leadership and team dynamics.

What truly stands out is how Louise's approach resonates on a personal level. I found the practical insights and the emphasis on balancing performance, growth, and wellbeing to be incredibly impactful. It's a brilliant guide for leaders who want to foster a more engaged and productive team while also prioritizing individual fulfillment.

The concepts are both thought-provoking and highly relatable, making it a must-read for anyone looking to transform their professional environment. This book has given me the tools to drive positive change within my organization and truly make work work for everyone involved.

**BRENTON RICHMOND**, General Manager, Inghams Enterprises Pty Ltd

## **Practical tips to improve your work life**

The state of the modern workplace is troubling: we're consistently stressed, unhappy, and burned out. Given the incredible increases in worker productivity and GDP per capita over the last 200 years, it seems positive progress is being made everywhere in the workplace except in the human experience of it.

Enter Louise Gilbert, and *Make Work Work for You*. Louise understands humans. She knows how we think, how we feel, and how we operate in the modern world, and in this book, she unpacks twenty-seven (yes, twenty-seven!) practices that each have the potential to dramatically improve how we feel about work, and positively impact the contributions we make. I defy anyone not to find at least one practical tip to improve your work life in this book.

**COL FINK**, Business Coach, Author of *Speakership*, *Tribe of Learning* and *The Solo Pro*

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**LOUISE GILBERT**



**GRAMMAR  
FACTORY**  
— ESTD 2013 —



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*To Elodie—you're my new pair of  
glasses through which I see the world. x*

*(I love you too, Harrison.)*

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## INTRODUCTION

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WHEN I WAS seventeen, my dad, Vince, and my big brother, Chris, were adamant I needed to learn to drive a manual car. ‘Don’t even bother with an automatic, Louise,’ was their advice. I was wary of the whole idea—three pedals? Yikes! Why make it harder for me? What if I pressed the wrong pedal at the wrong time? Sounded like a disaster waiting to happen. But Chris convinced me by saying it’d be easier to get a boyfriend. This was the early 2000s, and being able to drive a sportscar was impressive, according to my brother. Wearing braces and being at an all-girls school, I was aware of my chances of getting a boyfriend, so I listened to him.

Next thing I knew, we jumped in Chris’s car and headed down to the local beach, Half Moon Bay, where there was a huge ramp leading down towards the sea. Chris drove halfway up the ramp, turned the car off, and then told me to switch seats with him and drive the rest of the way. I was being

chucked into the deep end and had to sink or swim. Literally. If I released the clutch too quickly I'd stall the car and my brother and I would slide down the hill into the murky depths of the bay below.

And that's how I learnt to drive a manual. How to press the right pedal at the right time.

In business, you also have three pedals—performance, growth and wellbeing. **Wellbeing** is about feeling good. It's a state where you feel purposeful and engaged and have healthy relationships. This applies not just to you but to your team and the whole organisation. **Growth** is about getting better. It's about personal and professional skills and capacity. Teams and organisations also experience growth. It's about change and about becoming *more*. **Performance** is about doing great. It's getting the job done, reaching the outcome, and reaping the benefits.

If you're not pressing the right pedals at the right times, your organisation may not be able to achieve excellence, and some of this might sound familiar...

- Your people are stressed and on the verge of burnout.
- You're having trouble attracting, retaining and developing the right people.
- Your teams struggle to work well together, especially in the hybrid work scenario.
- There's more work than your teams can handle.

Performance, growth and wellbeing are critical elements that you, your teams and your organisation

need to achieve excellence and make work work for you. They reinforce each other. You can't have one without the other. It's about feeling good AND doing great AND getting better. When you have one or two of these things but not the second and third, you're out of whack. When you're out of whack—when you're hitting the wrong pedal at the wrong time, or just one or two but not all three—work won't work for you.

You may remember a time when organisations were all about growth and performance. Back then, growing fast was the goal. We threw everything we had into maximising profits, getting market share, and becoming the go-to people for whatever widgets we were making. We had to be the biggest and the brightest. Then, after a few years we wondered why everybody was going to bed for months on end or giving up the rat race to sit on top of a mountain and meditate for the rest of their lives. Burnout became an epidemic and everybody was jumping ship.

All the leaders went, 'Oh God, we need to prioritise wellbeing.' So, we shifted our focus over to that pedal. We sent people to retreats and spas. We did a bunch of stuff that made us feel really good. Inevitably, performance suffered because we took our foot off that pedal. Then we put our foot back on the performance pedal, and guess what? Six months later, everybody's burnt out again. It became a vicious cycle.

When you have growth and performance, you have **acceleration**. But you see the problem here... Without wellbeing, acceleration is **unsustainable**.



When you have growth and wellbeing, there is **evolution**. You're moving forward and developing. There's progress. However, unless you include performance in the mix, the organisation will be **unviable**. Shareholders have to be kept happy, and profits have to be made. You can innovate your socks off, but if nobody is buying your whizz-bang new products and they just sit on the shelf, the organisation will die.

When you have wellbeing and performance, you have **consistency**, but without growth, you will remain **underdeveloped**. This is when stagnation sets in. In today's market, where competition is fierce, customers need change and want more. Without an innovative edge, an organisation will soon become irrelevant.



**FIGURE 1** 3 Pedals of Excellence

## **Excellence is found around the edges**

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The problem is that people think of these three things as zero-sum. They accept the belief that if you push on the performance pedal, the other two might come down. Or if you focus on growth for a while, that will come at the expense of performance. There's this sense of bargaining and trading off... of haggling or fighting... of compromise. We need to reduce the friction between these three areas and create flow and alignment between them both inside and outside these realms and in the spaces where they meet. Excellence is in the edges.

It is possible to achieve performance, growth and wellbeing in equal measure. To feel good, do great and get better. The key is knowing how to push on the three pedals in ways that are positive sum. To push the right pedal at the right time. To push on one pedal without backing off on one or both of the others. And there are ways to do this that will help you improve across all three areas. It's not a trade-off. It's plus, plus, plus.

Performance + Growth + Wellbeing  
means an individual, team or  
organisation is accelerating and  
evolving consistently.  
This is business excellence.

Formula 1 is a sport dedicated to the relentless pursuit of excellence. It's cutting edge. This pursuit of excellence means cars now reach speeds of almost 400 kilometres per hour. But even Formula 1 has to find balance. When I interviewed F1 commentator David Croft about this, he explained how the well-being of teams couldn't simply be brushed aside to accommodate the voracious appetite of the public for more and faster races. Mechanics have to sleep. Drivers need time off. Nowadays, there are curfews, and teams sleep in comfortable hotel rooms, not in the paddock behind the team garage. And these changes have made a material difference. In 1994, Ayrton Senna became the twenty-ninth F1 driver to be killed in either practice or racing. But in the thirty years since, there has been only one death. That is one death too many, and improvements in safety continue, but the cars are faster than ever. It's all about finding the balance that allows excellence to emerge.

As a leader, you need to work out how to do things so that you're improving your performance, increasing your growth and enhancing your well-being simultaneously. You need strategies to help you do that. And that is what this book is all about. *Making Work Work for You* presents twenty-seven practices leaders can use to ensure their people are feeling good, doing great and getting better. These are the practical moves leaders can make that will help balance performance, growth and wellbeing while achieving excellence.

It's a bit like a Twister game. If you haven't played it . . . There's a mat with coloured circles, and spinning a wheel tells you to put your left foot or your right foot or one of your hands on a red circle, a blue circle, a green circle or a yellow circle. The trick is doing this without becoming unbalanced. Work is like this. If wellbeing is suffering, you need to get a hand or a foot on a wellbeing circle, but you must do this without the whole organisation becoming unbalanced. If all your employees go meditate on a mountain for a year, the company will end up in the ditch. You need to find a way to enhance wellbeing without sending the company broke—find a circle on the Twister mat that's the right colour and won't tip you over as you reach for it. The practices in this book are like those coloured circles. Choose a circle to reach for that won't tip you over but will keep you balanced and upright.

In this book, I bring together lessons from hundreds of organisations. These key leadership practices will foster performance, growth and wellbeing for individuals, teams and organisations. I've wrapped up everything I know about inspiring change, creating real shifts, achieving transformational outcomes and bringing all this together in the day-to-day. Working the right way fuels our performance, helps us grow and builds our wellbeing. And while each practice in this book focuses on one area, if you apply them diligently you will find that they enhance all three. Everything is connected. Excellence is contagious. It's found

in the spaces where all three areas meet. Together, these practices will make work work for you.

## **How to use this book**

---

I'd love it if you could read my book cover to cover and absorb all the lessons presented here. But I've been working in the field of change for almost two decades now, and I know how it works; I get that you're busy. So, start small. Start tiny. Give one practice a go and embed it before you move on to another. I've deliberately designed this book so you can pick it up, put it down, practise one practice and then pick it up again. I hope to see photos of readers holding well-thumbed, dog-eared books that have been put to good use.

Each practice is designed to help you press one of the three pedals of excellence—performance, growth and wellbeing—and is further classified into the areas of individual, team and organisation. On page 11, you'll see the twenty-seven practices set out in a grid to help you find one that meets your most pressing needs.

Let's say you're concerned about how work is affecting your individual wellbeing. If you look at the grid, you'll find three practices listed under the intersection of 'wellbeing' and 'individual', plus a description that extracts the essence of what that practice is about. That will help you choose which one to try out. Or maybe you're concerned about

the performance of the organisation as a whole. In that case, look up the practices under the intersection of ‘performance’ and ‘organisation’. And so on. None of the twenty-seven leadership practices is a long-winded essay. I’ve kept things short and sweet so you can get the gist of what I’m talking about and quickly put the practices into—well—practice.

And here’s the kicker—while each practice powers one pedal, they’re strengthening the other two as well! These practices do not require you to make trade-offs between your performance and wellbeing. They show you how to make the right moves at the right time to create excellence. For example, knowing your stress language so you can do something about it is under ‘wellbeing.’ But this isn’t just good for your health and wellbeing. It boosts your performance and supports your personal and professional growth.

As you begin to deploy more of these practices, you’ll begin to absorb the lessons and find that you reach for them automatically when you need to push on a particular pedal. Over time, these twenty-seven lessons will begin to merge, and their combined effect will become greater than the power of the individual practices. Your improved expertise and your ability to change the way you think will set you up for the challenges of an uncertain future and propel you to greater success as a leader who knows how to make work work for you and your organisation.

I’ve spent close to twenty years as a change consultant and have worked with thousands of people

and over a hundred organisations. I'm a speaker, facilitator and mentor, and I develop, train and coach at the executive, team and individual levels. I understand the interplay of performance, growth and wellbeing, as well as when and how to apply the strategies in each area to achieve excellence. I'm also a start-up founder, entrepreneur and business owner, and I know firsthand the challenges that leaders face. My experience is underpinned by education and lifelong learning, and at the last count I've undertaken twenty-eight licences, certifications and short courses—a dedication to learning I'd like to thank my neurodivergent brain for! So, trust me when I say I know how to make work work for you.

I hope this book will change your view of the world of work. I hope that you will learn that there is no need to compromise on performance, growth or wellbeing. With these twenty-seven practices as your starting point, you can embrace a future dedicated to striving for excellence. This book will help you feel less smashed and less stressed and enable you to lead a better life while achieving big improvements and outcomes in your business. Whether you're a seasoned executive or an aspiring leader, in these pages you will find the tools you need to thrive in the modern workplace and make work truly work for you.

## GUIDE TO THE PRACTICES

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THE FOLLOWING tables will help you navigate the twenty-seven practices. They allow you to quickly find the practice that will best support your specific needs using the questions listed.

	INDIVIDUAL	TEAM	ORGANISATION
<b>WELLBEING</b> FEELING GOOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work/life contamination (p21)</li> <li>• Work/life whiplash (p31)</li> <li>• Work/life wealth (p41)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team tetris (p113)</li> <li>• Meeting make-overs (p123)</li> <li>• Quick, quality chats (p131)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built-in well-being (p201)</li> <li>• Human-centric change (p209)</li> <li>• Powerful engagement (p217)</li> </ul>
<b>GROWTH</b> DOING GREAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build change-making energy (p51)</li> <li>• Drive your development (p61)</li> <li>• Build Mindset X (p69)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give (good) feedback; get (good) feedback (p141)</li> <li>• Learn together; grow together (p151)</li> <li>• Notice the need; find the noise (p159)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look before you leap (p227)</li> <li>• Be constantly curious (p237)</li> <li>• Guide your growth (p245)</li> </ul>
<b>PERFORMANCE</b> GETTING BETTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know your stress language (p81)</li> <li>• Honour needs, not norms (p89)</li> <li>• Manage your state (p97)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aligned purpose (p169)</li> <li>• Great relationships (p177)</li> <li>• Clear roles (p185)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take off and transform (p261)</li> <li>• Cultivate your culture (p275)</li> <li>• Mine some metaphors (p283)</li> </ul>



## Part 1—Individual practices

<b>Work/life contamination</b>	Is your work poisoning your life? This practice will help you find a cure.	<b>p21</b>
<b>Work/life whiplash</b>	Are the clashing demands of work and life clamouring for your attention, making it impossible to focus effectively? This practice will teach you how to handle competing demands and protect yourself from serious ‘injury’.	<b>p31</b>
<b>Work/life wealth</b>	Do you long for a better work/life balance? Do you wish you had more time to actually live your life? This practice will get you started on creating the life you want, one that feels good and has no regrets.	<b>p41</b>
<b>Build change-making energy</b>	Are you stuck in a rut? Do you want to make changes but find you keep falling at the first hurdle? This practice will help you find the energy that’s been missing.	<b>p51</b>
<b>Drive your development</b>	Do you have a development plan? Maybe. But how do you feel when you look at it? Energised and excited? Or bored because it was a TICK AND FLICK? This practice will explain how to create a development plan that lights you up.	<b>p61</b>
<b>Build Mindset X</b>	Can you deal confidently with complex situations? When you’re facing a problem you haven’t encountered before, where the answers aren’t clear, do you have the capacity to handle it by adapting and experimenting? This practice will help you to grow that capacity.	<b>p69</b>
<b>Know your stress language</b>	Are you stressed? No, let’s ask another question—do you know when you’re stressed? If you find this question surprising, this could be a great practice for you to try.	<b>p81</b>
<b>Honour needs, not norms</b>	Is everybody on your team able to make work work for them and perform at their best? If not, it might be worth taking a close look at their individual needs.	<b>p89</b>
<b>Manage your state</b>	Are you having trouble connecting with your people? Do you find it difficult to inspire them at crucial times? This practice will help you get your state in sync with theirs, which may be just what you need.	<b>p97</b>

## Part 2—Team practices

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<b>Team tetris</b>	Do some of your team have nothing to do while others are slammed? Are some bored and others stimulated?  This practice will help you balance that load to create efficiency and satisfaction in equal measure that lifts the whole team's wellbeing.	<b>p113</b>
<b>Meeting makeovers</b>	Are the meetings in your workplace creating brain-dead zombies instead of engaged, energised employees?  A meeting makeover may be the antidote.	<b>p123</b>
<b>Quick, quality chats</b>	Do you find it hard to connect with your team members because you don't have the time to get into a D&M with them? Or because you never talk except on Zoom?  This practice will show you how to create quality connections with your team in a matter of moments.	<b>p131</b>
<b>Give (good) feedback; get (good) feedback</b>	Do you know you should be giving your team feedback, but are afraid to do it? Or don't know how to do it? Or are you doing it only to find it backfires on you?  This practice will show you how to give and get feedback that grows you and your team.	<b>p141</b>
<b>Learn together; grow together</b>	Is your team the envy of the organisation? Does everybody want to join it? No?  This practice will help you create an amazing team that everyone wants to be on.	<b>p151</b>
<b>Notice the need; find the noise</b>	Do you find you're constantly putting out fires, only to have them re-ignite the second you turn your back? Are you wondering what you're doing wrong?  This practice will help you get to the root cause and extinguish those fires for good.	<b>p159</b>
<b>Aligned purpose</b>	Are you all on the same page and rowing in the same direction? Or is there discord and chaos that you can't find a cause for?  Aligning your purpose may be just what the doctor ordered.	<b>p169</b>
<b>Great relationships</b>	Is everybody in your organisation getting along like a house on fire? Or is your workplace more like a dysfunctional family living in a house that's burning down?  This practice will help you find harmony.	<b>p177</b>
<b>Clear roles</b>	Are you and your team members clear about what their role is? Are you all sticking to that role and running in the right lane? Or do you seem to be doing each other's work?  This practice will ensure everyone sticks to their own aisle and performance is enhanced.	<b>p185</b>

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## Part 3—Organisation practices

<b>Built-in wellbeing</b>	Is working for your organisation a health hazard? Or does your company provide a haven for workers?	<b>p201</b>
<b>Human-centric change</b>	Is an avalanche of change raining down on your organisation and causing everyone to lose their footing? If so, you need to think about not what is changing, but how you're changing.  This practice will help you do that.	<b>p209</b>
<b>Powerful engagement</b>	Is your team engaged, excited and egging each other on to do better and better? No?  Engagement is often misunderstood, but this practice will reveal the secrets to creating authentic engagement.	<b>p217</b>
<b>Look before you leap</b>	Are your innovation and change efforts backfiring? You may need guidance on how to anticipate and avoid unintended, unwelcome consequences.	<b>p227</b>
<b>Be constantly curious</b>	Is your organisation growing effortlessly? Is the table piled high with new ideas? Or is it stagnating?  This practice will show you how to unleash childlike curiosity to turbocharge growth.	<b>p237</b>
<b>Guide your growth</b>	Can your people see other people's perspectives? Are there a variety of viewpoints in the mix?  This practice will ensure that everyone's opinion is sought and honoured, leading to more and different perspectives that grow the whole organisation.	<b>p245</b>
<b>Take off and transform</b>	Is your organisation missing out on opportunities? Struggling to stay ahead of the curve?  Assessing your agility ability through this practice may be the antidote.	<b>p261</b>
<b>Cultivate your culture</b>	Is your organisation the envy of others? Are quality people hammering at the doors to get in?  If that sounds desirable, this practice may help you boost your popularity.	<b>p275</b>
<b>Mine some metaphors</b>	Do you want to take your organisation to the next level? Do you want to learn a practice that nobody else is using?  This one's for you.	<b>p283</b>

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