

Notes from "Simplicity" by Bill Jensen

The hardest thing is figuring out what to do in a world of infinite choices.

Simplicity is Power

Knowledge is power ONLY if you can and do use it. Few people do, because it's too complex.

Knowledge is:

- burden
- roadblock
- terrifying
- frustrating
- self-defeating
- paralyzing
- overwhelming
- difficult
- confusing
- inefficient
- overload
- ambiguous

My friend Mrs. Kohl said: "As I get older, I hope there are things my kids don't tell me."

Knowledge is a huge mass of facts constantly swirling around you. It is power ONLY if you can spot and pick out the facts you can use to achieve something you want.

Simplicity is the art of making the complex clear. THAT is power. identify and ignore what does not matter. Focus on what does matter. Simplify.

Change how you use time. Use time to make what matters clear:

1. Learn what your market wants (exactly).
2. Learn what your competition does poorly.
3. Now put together the jigsaw puzzle: how to get there from where you are now.

You are limited by your ability to order, make sense of, and connect everything demanding your attention. Clarity. Confusion destroys time. Confusion is how long it takes to figure out what to do and what not to do.

If you don't know where to focus, you can't possibly know what to do. You are lost.

The world is messy, full of contradictions. We are driven by conflicting priorities & emotions. Making the right choices fast, while everything is changing, is really tough.

Simplicity is based on human nature & common sense. Simplicity means making things user-centered. What's important is how to decide what to do.

The key is to translate knowledge into productivity. Use it to clarify the tasks that need to be done.

We're willing to listen to others. But we'll only actually DO what we think we should do. Your job as a leader is to translate vision into reality. To do this, you must "make simple" everything which is the slightest bit confusing or complex.

When it is simple, people can do it and do more of it. They don't struggle with decisions.

Define what must be ignored. Ignorance is Power! What questions do people ask? THAT is what you must know. Create less clutter or make sense of it faster. Focus tools, processes, & information on what people need.

One thing I know 100% for certain about YOU! No matter what your spouse or parents or kids say, no matter what your friends say, no matter what your boss says, no matter what I say, you will ALWAYS make your own choices.

Your success & happiness - or lack of it - depend 100% on the choices you make. It is 100% your choice what you focus on. This is true for every issue in your life. What you choose to focus on is up to you.

The barriers to clear, simple choices:

1. Unclear goals
2. Unclear communication
3. Not spotting & eliminating the unnecessary
4. Unproductive training
5. Unclear work processes
6. Unclear or untrained new technology

Our biggest limitation is our inability to order, make sense of and connect everything that demands our attention. You must make the complex clear. Useful information, knowledge, & wisdom are hidden in a sea of data. And new, useful data rarely - or *never* - get integrated into the existing system. So ...

1. Find the info
2. Translate info into a decision.

According to Jensen, the most conservative estimates show business info is doubling every 3 years. So every 1100 days, the amount of information you need to ignore, organize, translate, communicate, & build into solutions will double.

You must work on what's important, not what's urgent. **Most group communications:**

1. Share information that doesn't require action and/or
2. Communicate something for which there is no consequence if the recipient ignores it.

Solution: Format every communication so the recipient can make a decision.

The less clear the communication, the more unclear minds need to talk ... and confusion & paralysis become more likely.

Design every communication so a simple decision can be made. ALWAYS include your recommendation and reasons why. Make it a point to NOT waste people's time.

Feedback is necessary for improvement. You need the information, tools, & the process together, being used by someone who knows what to do.

The biggest problem is overwhelm. We know what to do. But there is so little time to do so much. Complexity robs us of time. (Lack of clarity).

Short summary:

1. Confusion costs more than you think. Work complexity abuses people's time.
2. Most people want to do the right thing and make a difference.
3. Find ways for people to create their own clarity.
4. Creating clarity takes common sense + discipline.

Questions ==> Simplicity

1. How do I decide what's important?
2. How do I navigate through it all by myself?
3. How do I make good decisions that get the result I want?

Consider what complexity is costing you.

- Lost opportunity?
- Lost \$\$?
- Emotional overwhelm?

Do you believe you need to take back control? What will you change?

What are the irreducible minimum functions that must be fulfilled for your business to be profitable?

Think backwards from what you need. Who is responsible?

Create less clutter for others. Make sense of it faster for yourself. Organize your ideas, questions & info so others can make sense of things faster. Find & use the best tools & processes, giving yourself more time to be productive.

- Can you simplify through teamwork?
- Can you simplify through technology?

80/20 rule

1. How to Plan
2. How to contract with teammates
3. How to listen and scan everything that comes your way
4. Pick strategic stories & change details for the specific audience.

The 5 Building Blocks

Sort - Focus on which few things are important and throw out the rest

Experience - Consider & plan what the experience will feel like. Beliefs.

Act - Choose, learn, & master the tools, resources, & processes.

Organize - Create & manage expectations. Reduce the # of things people do.

Clone - A strong team leader creates a simple, duplicateable system.

These 5 blocks are musical notes that can be played in infinite ways. How will you use time? When one thing gets attention, another thing gets ignored. Increasing demand for attention v.

less & less time. Ask your associates what they've learned and to define their role.

Before you start a project - what exactly will success look like? People must walk the talk - and you must know whether they are. If it's not easy to hand off a project to someone else, you have a messed-up project. What is your definition of success?

A plan is a tool to:

1. Focus attention - reduce infinite choices to a short to-do list.
2. Tell what is important and required stats to measure it.
3. Tell priorities.
4. Get feedback from team members.
5. Celebrate successes & learn from failures.

You can't execute a plan you don't understand. Preparation eliminates complexity. Your goal for any meeting or conversation is clarity.

Get clear before you use anyone else's time & attention. To get action, you must answer 5 questions:

1. How is this relevant to what I do?
2. What, specifically, should I do? (step-by-step; screen capture video)
3. How will I be measured? What are the consequences?
4. What tools & support are available?
5. What's In It For Me?

#4 is - by far- the most-asked question. Right tools + right time + right way shorten the to-do list, help focus. Training is critical.

Use these questions to spot problems, especially with tools. Always use Sort-Experience-Act-

Organize-Clone (SEAOC) to organize your thinking. Then your preparation takes just a very few minutes.

CEOs say:

"If it has a staple in it, it doesn't get read." So answer the 5 questions above on a single page or less. List the project-crucial tools, with a short description.

Follow the SEAOC model in several conversations with a person. If they don't change, they never will. Drop them.

Listening & Scanning - use SEAOC to organize everything:

1. Organize thinking when you plan.
2. Ask questions when you communicate.
3. Focus your listening & scanning.

You need a specific, concise listening strategy, or you'll get buried. Scan every conversation, meeting, & email for clarity:

1. Is this connected to what I do? (Give it 5 seconds to show you.)
2. List of next steps? If not, it's wasting your time.
3. Expectations? Must be clear.
4. Ability? How do things get done? What tools? Training?
5. Return? WIIFM? Not necessarily \$, but definitely something valuable to you.

Write up a short training for people in how to deal with you, how you want ideas presented. Coach them on how to keep everything simple.