

## Book Review

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### ***Inner Productivity (A Mindful Path to Efficiency and Enjoyment in Your Work)*, by Christopher Edgar**

I reviewed Chris Edgar's e-books last year, one of which, *Career Satisfaction From Within*, is available now as an audio course. I loved them, and wrote as much.

*Inner Productivity* is a new, full-length book that explores and expands the ideas Chris put forth in those earlier works. I love what he says about the book on his website.

*"My book takes a mindful approach to developing productivity, focusing on building our capacity to pay attention and rooting out limiting beliefs and fears that harm our effectiveness at work."*

As one who struggles against a propensity for distraction and a whole truck load of limiting beliefs, I was excited to read the book.

What I like about Chris Edgar's approach to productivity is that it focuses effort from the inside out, rather than on providing tips designed to limit external distractions. He argues that cleaning our workspace and ordering our files is good in that it can make us more efficient, but it doesn't really deal with our tendency to procrastinate, or the causes of our inner resistance. Logging out of email and Twitter helps, but only to the extent that we can control our urge to log back in and distract ourselves. The urge comes from within.

*Inner Productivity* is divided into five sections. The first, Your Inner Experience of Working, deals with our perception of our work. And in fact, Chris spends quite a bit of time making the (somewhat radical) point that reality is not the same as our perception of it. Once we are able to recognize our experience of a situation as being separate from the reality of a situation, we are empowered. Our ideas, feelings and judgements determine how the world looks to us, but not how it *has* to look, and not how it looks to everyone. It's a pretty powerful notion. It means we can change things we may never have thought we could.

The next three sections of the book are Attention, Intention and Foundation, which Edgar argues are the three essential elements of productivity. When all of these are present, he says, we are at our most productive.

So, what does he mean?

Attention is obvious, it's about getting past distractions, which are, as often as

not, self-induced and come from within. Intention is about aligning our work with our passions, doing work that is personally meaningful, setting goals that excite and energize us. Foundation is the tricky one. A good foundation requires that our sense of self-worth be independent from the work that we do. In our society (where "what do you do?" is the first question we ask people we meet), separating our sense of self from our professional title is not as easy as it sounds. The risk if we don't, of course, is that every mistake we make or setback we encounter at work, diminishes our sense of self. We become risk adverse and less creative as a means of self-preservation.

*Inner Productivity* includes exercises to help you understand and strengthen your attention, intention and foundation. Some are meditative, others are situational. Some require a pencil and paper, and one requires a secret act of selfishness. Not every exercise worked for me, but I was sometimes surprised by the ones that did. I think the trick to this book (and all books that require us to stop and look within) is to be open to what you discover. It's not always comfortable, but knowledge is power; and I've come to believe that self-knowledge may be the most powerful kind of all.

Which is the point Chris makes in the book's final section, Success Through Self-Knowledge. I love this:

*"The exercises in this book, rather than prescribing a list of habits you must force yourself to adopt, help you to look within yourself, and discover and transform the specific patterns of thinking and feeling that tend to hold you back. This is not the easiest path to pursue. Learning more about, and getting more comfortable with, yourself can be a painful process, because it demands that you explore areas of yourself that don't always seem mature, wholesome or socially acceptable."*

True, but (and I quote again) the "feeling of realness is exhilarating."

(*Inner Productivity*, as well as the audio course based on Career Satisfaction From Within, are available on Chris Edgar's Purpose-Power-Coaching website.)