

SELECTED EXCERPT FROM
WORKING HARD & WORKING WELL

Working Hard Working WELL &

Author's Note

by David E. K. Hunter



An excerpt from the book *Working Hard & Working Well*, which is available in full at leapofreason.org/workingwellbook

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Author's Note

This book represents what I have learned over the course of some three decades of leading, managing, and consulting to organizations and programs in both the public and nonprofit sectors, where I worked to build organizational competencies and capacity to improve the lives and prospects of marginalized, weakened, or otherwise disempowered individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations. Since I am addressing a wide audience with differing levels of exposure to the discipline of performance management, I will err on the side of explaining at a level of detail that will help newcomers to this approach understand and implement it. Nevertheless, I hope that this document will also be of interest and use to those with greater experience in this area, and that especially the examples of the work of front-line organizations will be a valuable resource and inspiration to them.

Early experiences that led to my approach to performance management came from working in or leading social service institutions and agencies. I refined my thinking and practices in the last decade and a half while consulting to an extraordinary group of public and nonprofit organizations (both direct-service agencies and funders). And it is to these organizations—their leaders, managers, and front-line staff—that I offer my heartfelt thanks for the opportunities they gave me to work with them, learn from them, and enjoy the trust they invested in me. But ultimately this document is dedicated to

the people who depend on the quality and effectiveness of the services and supports provided by such organizations—the agencies on which they rely to help them change their lives for the better.

I hope that this will be a useful guide for those who are interested in understanding performance management, those who want to learn how to develop performance-management systems, and those who are looking for practical knowledge about how to implement such systems in order to “manage to outcomes,” as [Mario Morino](#) puts it so well in his book *Leap of Reason*. I think of it as a “how-to” manual for leaders, managers, and staff working in direct-service organizations to help them work reliably and sustainably at high levels of quality, efficiency, and effectiveness. I hope it will also be useful to organizational consultants occupied in the area of performance management. The text is resolutely practical, a synthesis of my experiences into a matter-of-fact approach to both strategic and tactical (day-to-day) performance management.

I write this book as I move toward retirement, hoping to leave behind a resource for those who work in, fund, and consult to direct-service organizations. It is a book I write with some sadness, because it is a response to my perception that the social sector has failed, so far, to live up to its promise. While hundreds of thousands of social service organizations work incredibly hard to help structurally disadvantaged and socially marginalized individuals, families, and groups build better lives and life prospects for themselves and their children, few do so effectively—and indeed lack the organizational competencies and capacity to do so. This is a bitter truth. And though it is a collective failure—not only of these organizations, but also of their funders and consultants—it is also a correctable one. That is why, in the end, this is a forward-looking, even optimistic undertaking. I have held nothing back. I give numerous examples, and at times I share observations that reflect what I have learned with my sleeves rolled up—while working in and leading social service organizations, and also during my subsequent career as a consultant to them and to funders.

I began writing this book in 2011, more as a way to think through and refine my approach than with any thought of publishing the results. Gradually I discussed what I was doing with various colleagues and was encouraged to turn it into a manual that others could use. That escalated the expectations with which I approached this, and thus the time it required. I am very grateful to [Public/Private Ventures](#) for having supported my final drive to pull this into shape so that I could begin to share it and solicit feedback. (When P/PV, an institution that contributed so much to the social sector, had to close its doors, we all suffered a great loss.) Because of my great respect for [Mario Morino](#), who has emerged as one of the most articulate and persuasive advocates for the need to support nonprofit organizations in building their capacity to “manage to outcomes,” as well as my earlier involvement with his indispensable book *Leap of Reason*, I asked him and his colleague [Lowell Weiss](#) to read the manuscript. Both were very gracious in encouraging me to bring this effort into publishable form, and Mario was amazingly generous in offering to take on the costs of doing so. Together they assembled a superb team of professionals. Lowell, assisted by [Cheryl Collins](#), served as general editor and was especially helpful in pushing for clarity of thought and streamlining the logical flow of chapters and elements. [Katya Rice](#) took on the painstaking work of copyeditor, [Chris Wright](#) the details of book design. And finally, I want to acknowledge my dear friend [Michael Bailin](#), a pioneer and seminal thinker in transforming philanthropy into effective social investing during his tenure as president of the [Edna McConnell Clark Foundation](#). He recruited me into philanthropy and consultation and gave me a platform from which I could undertake the various streams of work that ultimately led to the creation of this volume.

Many people who work in the social sector have suggested that it would be good to have some easy-to-apply tools that organizations could use to assess their strengths and their capacity for managing performance, and also to chart the areas that need further development. Similarly, there is great interest in knowing when

an organization is ready to undertake an evaluation, either formative or summative. I recently developed such tools and tested them; described in [Appendix III](#), they are web-based and available on my website: www.dekhconsulting.com.

A final note: I intend this document to be an admonishment to those funders who demand performance in which they don't invest, results for which they don't pay, and accountability from which they exempt themselves. Stop the madness!