

How to Get ROWE Working for Your Team

By Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson, authors of *Why Work Sucks and How to Fix It*
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Let's say you like the sound of a **Results-Only Work Environment** but you know it would be a tough sell at your company. Even if you're not able to roll out the full program, here are 10 things you can do right now to kick the habit of old-fashioned, time-based management and get your team focusing on results instead.

1. Make meetings optional.

Let people evaluate their need to participate. If they know they can make better use of their time (and the company's time), then they should.

2. Stop judging how people spend their time.

Seemingly innocent little digs like "nice of you to join us" can hurt loyalty, engagement, and productivity. We refer to judgmental language like this as Sludge. (Having a term for it makes it easier to call people out on it.) You, and your employees, need to knock off comments like:

"Ten o'clock and just getting in?"

"Rita is in the lactation room again. I wish I had kids. I'd never have to work."

"I can't believe Toby got that promotion. He's never here!"

3. Reward employees based on results, not on how much time they put in at the office.

Instead of saying, "James put in a lot of extra hours this month — good for James!" talk about what James actually contributed. What did he do for the company? Do not use any reference to time. Otherwise, your team will compete to "out-time" every else to get attention.

4. Don't prescribe what work-life balance looks like for your employees.

"Well, you have a kid, so you'll need to make sure they're in day care when you're home working, otherwise you won't get anything done."

"Wow, it's 6:30 — you should really go home now and spend time with your family."

It's not up to you. It's up to them.

5. Don't handpick who gets to be flexible and who doesn't.

In order to work a flexible, results-based program has to apply to everyone — and yes, that includes administrative assistants and new hires.

6. Stop managing by walking around.

Every time you "check in" on someone, they have to stop what they were doing, reorient their thinking to give you a spontaneous presentation, and then, once you leave, reorient themselves back to doing the work. Send them an e-mail instead.

7. Quit using fake crises as a management tool.

Dropping a last-minute request on your employees is the equivalent of a grade-school fire drill. It creates a false sense of urgency and wastes their time. Plan ahead instead of popping by with that "quick question" you should have asked a week ago.

8. Don't think that you're a great boss if during a snowstorm you "let" your people "leave early."

Sending out an e-mail "letting" people take time off for a project well done or a snowstorm — or whatever — is another way to make people feel like children. It reinforces the fact that you have control over their time and they don't. Let people make this decision themselves.

9. Stop relying on human resources to do the “people” part of your job — get clear about performance goals, communicate often, and hold people accountable.

You lose your credibility when you bring in HR to have the tough conversations. When your employees aren't performing, *talk* to them. Find out why, and rather than focus on how hard they're working or the amount of hours they're putting in, focus on the work itself. What do they need to do to succeed?

10. Trust your people like you trust yourself.

Stop making rules for the few you're afraid won't live up to your expectations. Or rules that protect you from the incompetence of the few but hinder the performance of the many. Your goal is to make work as unlike grade school as possible.

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