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*Helping people to ‘make things
happen’: A framework for
proactivity at work*

*Winthrop Professor Sharon K. Parker
The UWA Business School
University of Western Australia*



*“There are three ways people
behave at work: making things
happen, watching what
happens, and wondering what
happened”
happened”*

How do you (your staff) behave in
Which kind are you?
your work?

How does your leadership
influence your staff's proactive
behavior?



Does
proactivity
matter? (for
change?)



What is
proactivity?



What
motivates
proactivity?



Is proactivity
born or
made?
(If made,
how do you
make it?)



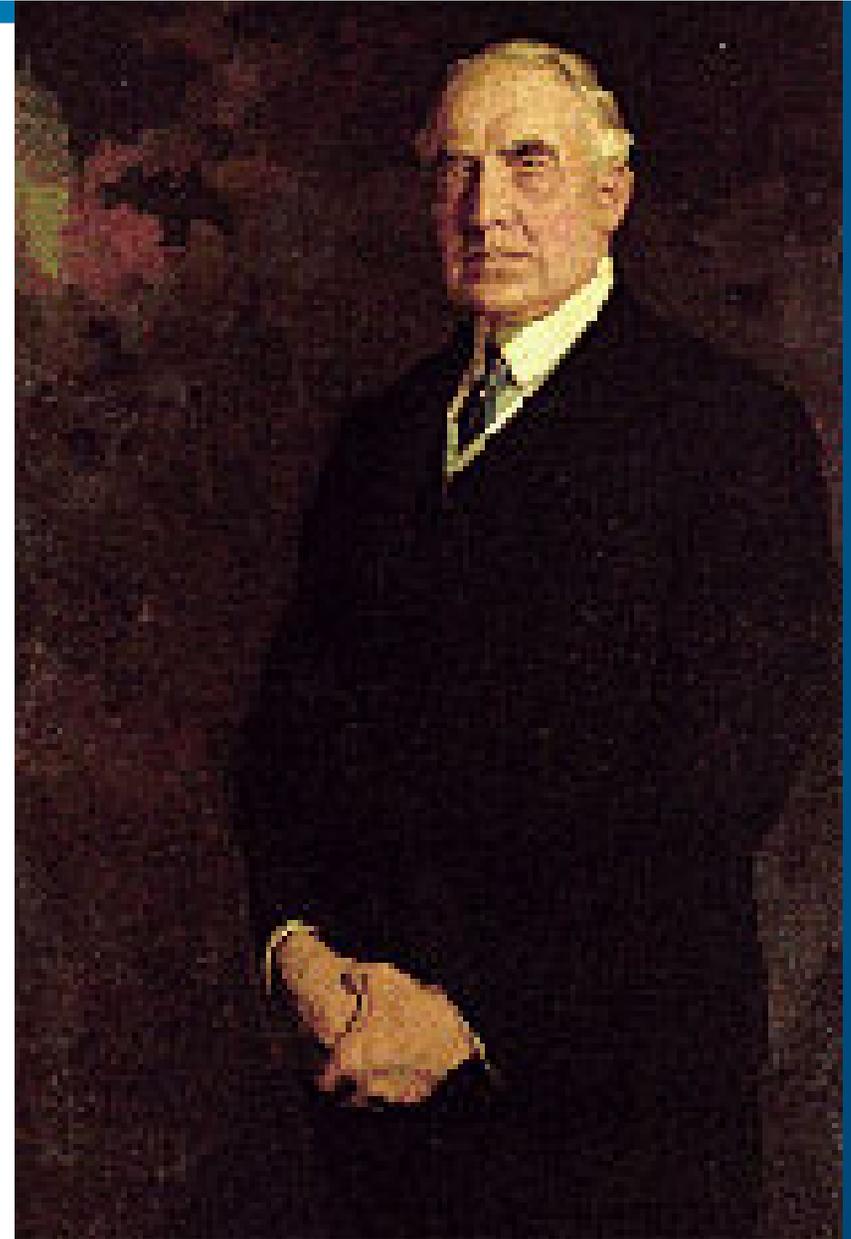
Is proactivity
always
good?





Made things happen

CR



Wondered what happened

Does presidential proactivity matter?



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YES!

- Proactivity of presidents predicted historian ratings of
 - Effectiveness
 - Making great decisions
 - War avoidance



Deluga

Proactivity also matters....



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- For **job performance** across a range of jobs



Crant, 1995

- For individual **career success**
- For **innovation, intrapreneurship, and entrapreneurship**
- For emergent / bottom-up **change**

Proactivity and change



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“The world is moved along,
not only by the mighty shoves of its
heroes but also by the aggregate
of the tiny pushes of each
honest worker”

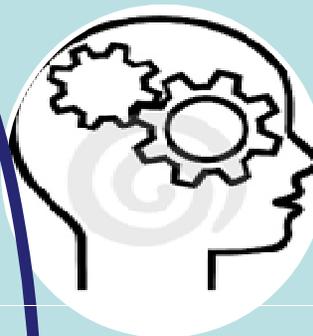




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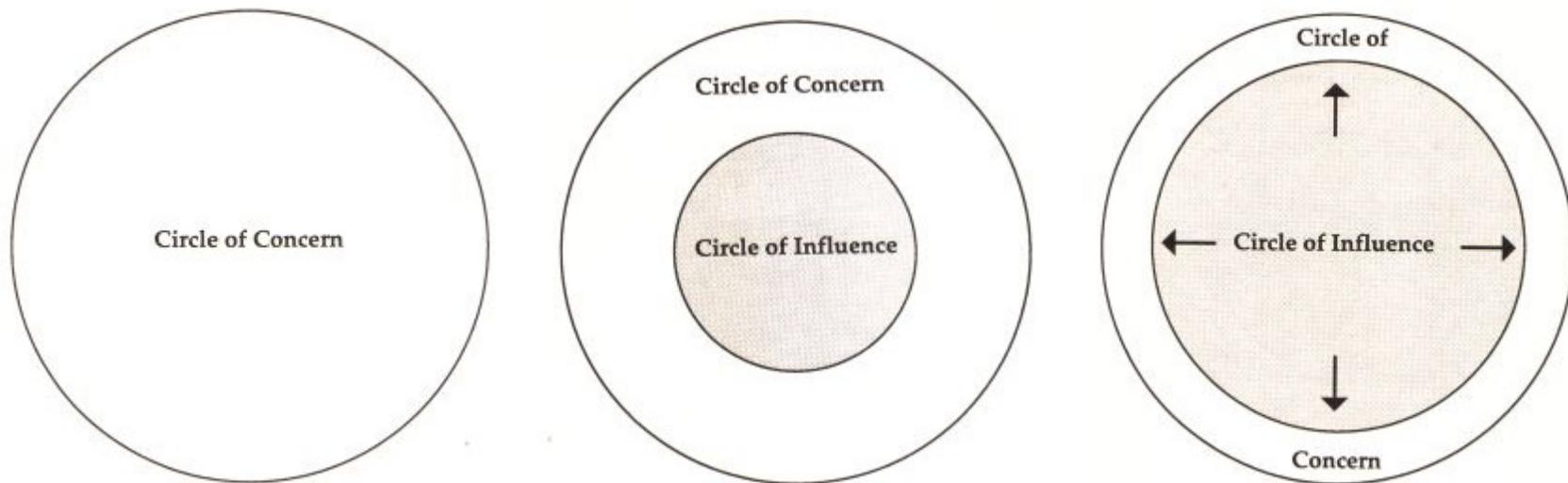


What is proactivity?

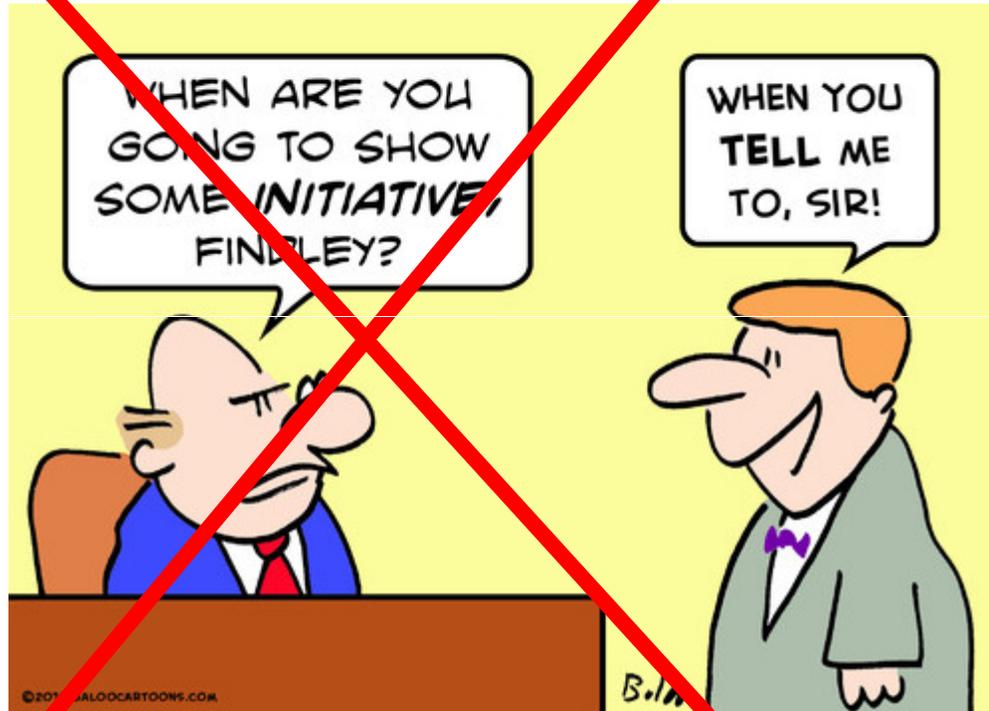


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“Being proactive involves self-initiated efforts to bring about change in the environment and/or oneself to achieve a different future (Parker, et al., 2010)



Stephen Covey (2004, 2009)
7 Habits of Highly Effective People





- “On a few occasions if there’s something that’s not working or is causing a duplication of work then I’ve challenged it. One incident is that there was a process not so long back where we’d send out a letter to a customer and also leave a message on their phone. So what we did - we evaluated that - so to leave a message first then, if there’s no response, send a letter rather than doing both at the same time. I know it’s only a little thing, but it saves a lot of time.” *(Call centre agent; Bindl & Parker, 2010)*





Taking
charge of
change

Crafting
jobs

Proactively
seeking
feedback

Proactive
safety

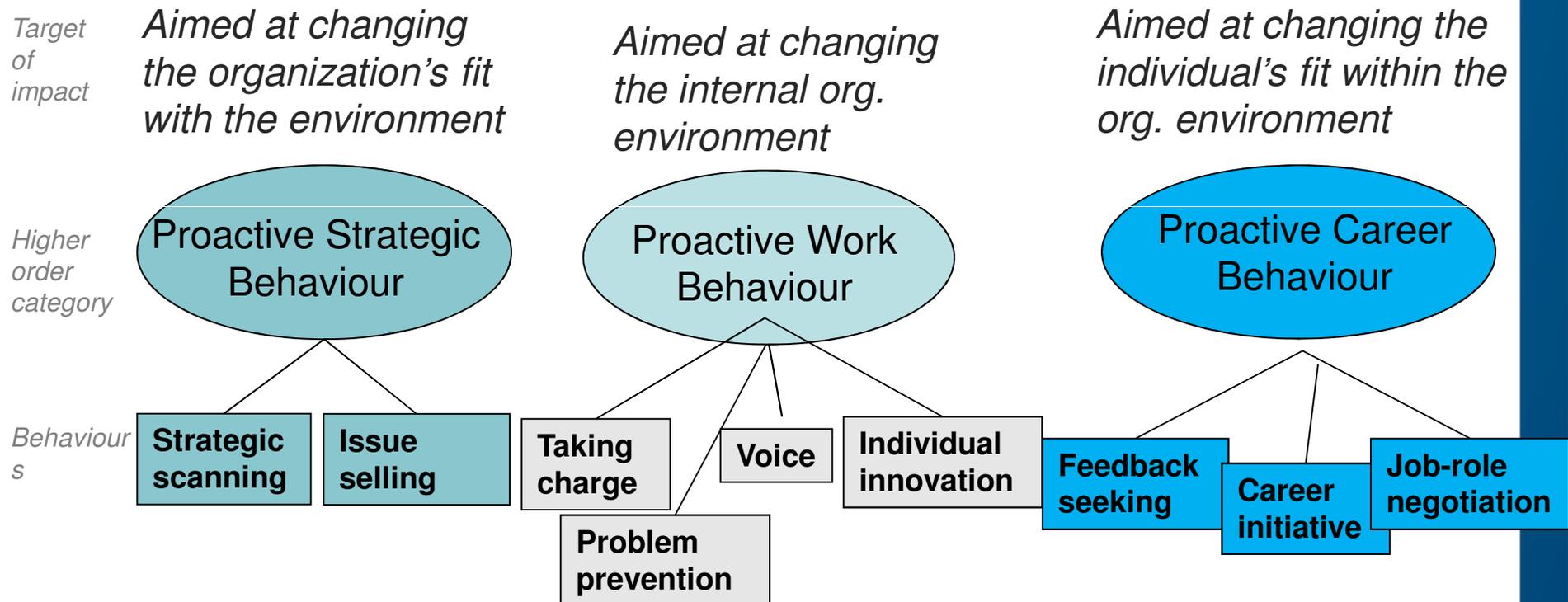
Improving
work
methods

Speaking
up with
ideas

Actively
sculpting
careers



Categories of Individual Proactivity





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Proactivity can be risky & uncertain

“A lot of the time (proactivity) is seen as being overly competitive or pointing out weaknesses or an inability to let things sit as they are... Basically, whenever you are suggesting improvement, the flip side of that coin is that you can be seen as criticising the status quo... Being proactive is extremely difficult to do effectively.”

(Manager, Consulting Organization)

For example study
See Grant, Collins, Parker
(2009)



“A ‘take charge’ guy would be nice but I’m looking for more of the ‘take blame’ type.”



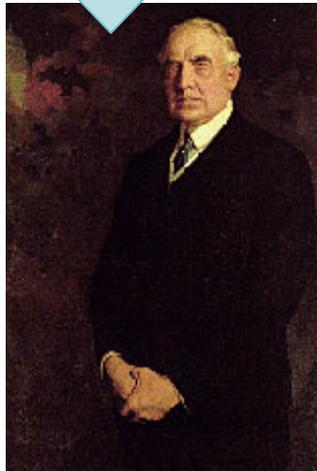
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Can do motivational pathway



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"I am not fit
for this office
and never
should have
been here"



Warren Harding

CRICOS Provider Code: 00126G

"I think it is getting
yourself established in
the business and getting
yourself known and then
getting your **confidence**
to speak out and say 'this
is an issue' and say
why... If you're hesitant,
its not going to be
heard..."



New manager

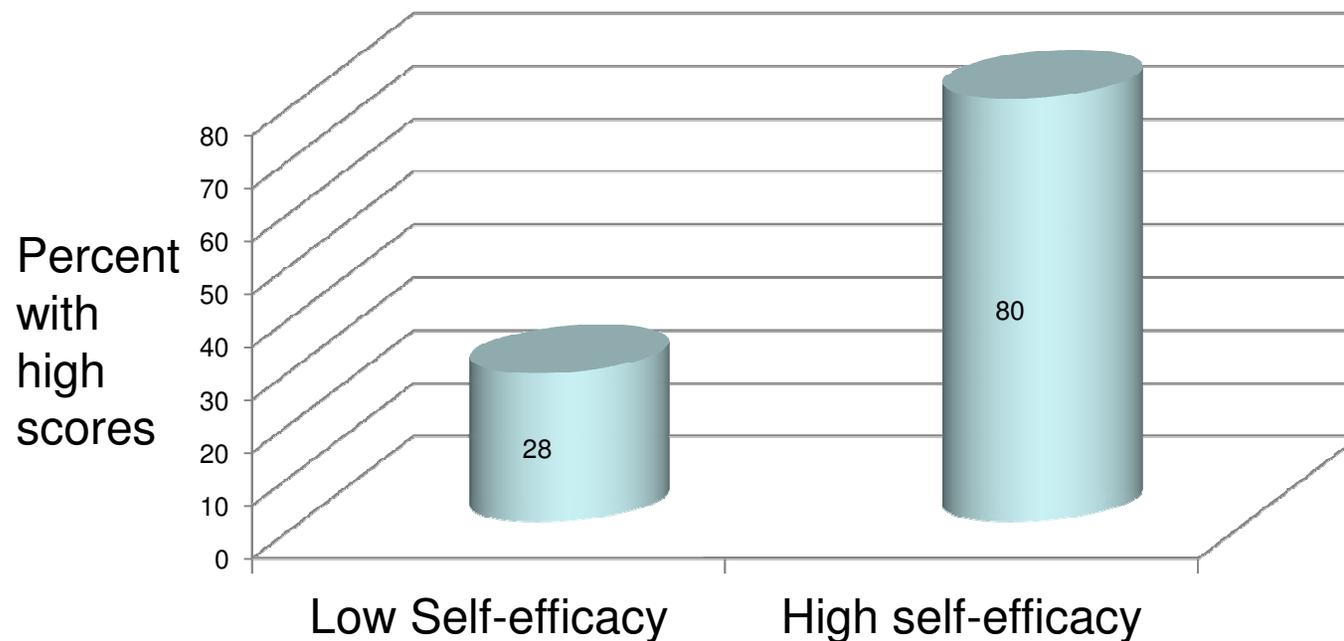
Can do pathway



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- Many studies show self-efficacy → proactivity

To what extent *do you try to bring about improved procedures in your work place?*



N = 500 nurses
(Parker et al., in
prep.)



Proactive motivation

Can do

- Self-efficacy

Reason to

- Internalized motivation

Energized to

- Activated positive affect



Proactive behavior



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You get back to
that goddamn cubicle
and start thinking
outside the box!

**CREATIVITY
CORPORATION**



McDuck

Reason to pathway



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Some examples of *internalized* motivation:

- “Because I enjoy the challenge”
- “Because I believe its important”
- “Because its ‘my job’”



Parker et al. 2006; Ohly & Fritz,
2007; Dorensboch, et al., 2005

Reason to pathway



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“Because its part of who I am (and who I want to be)”

My future work self spends a lot of time teaching, explaining complex issues to students. My future self works collaboratively with other researchers in other disciplines ... My future self is not constantly reminded of the need to be competitive. My future self is allowed to lead his research on whichever topic he likes, while using whatever approach he likes. My future self is free and has the professional stability necessary to be genuinely creative.”

Graduate student in Philosophy



**Proactive
Career
Behavior**



Strauss, Griffin & Parker
(2012)



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Proactive behavior

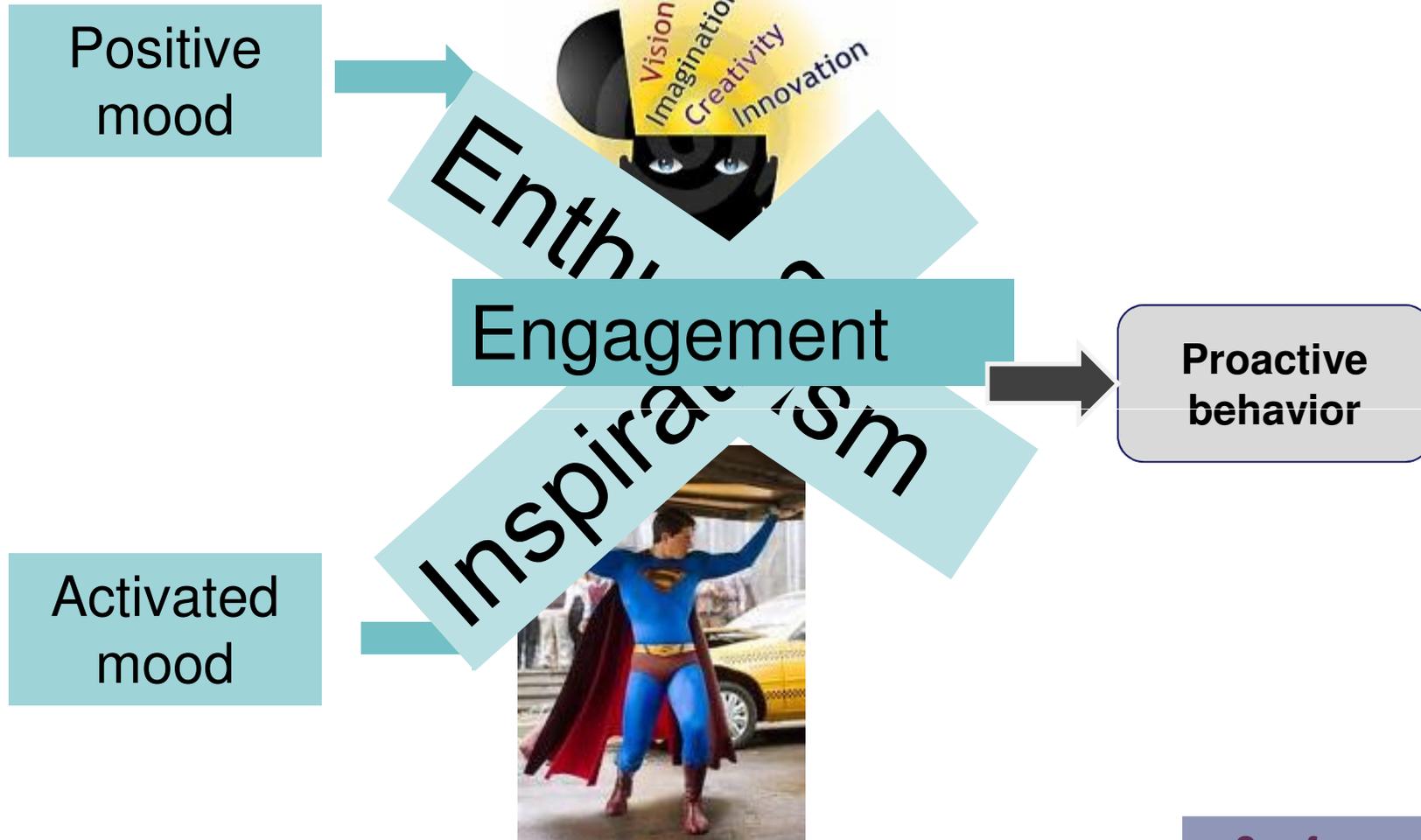


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Energised to pathway



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Proactive Motivation
Can Do
Reason To
Energised To

Plan from here....



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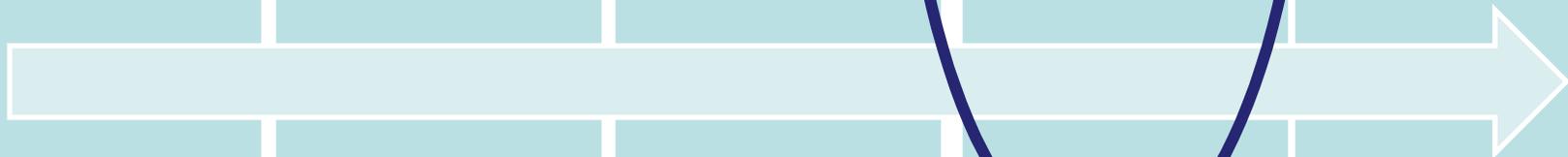
What
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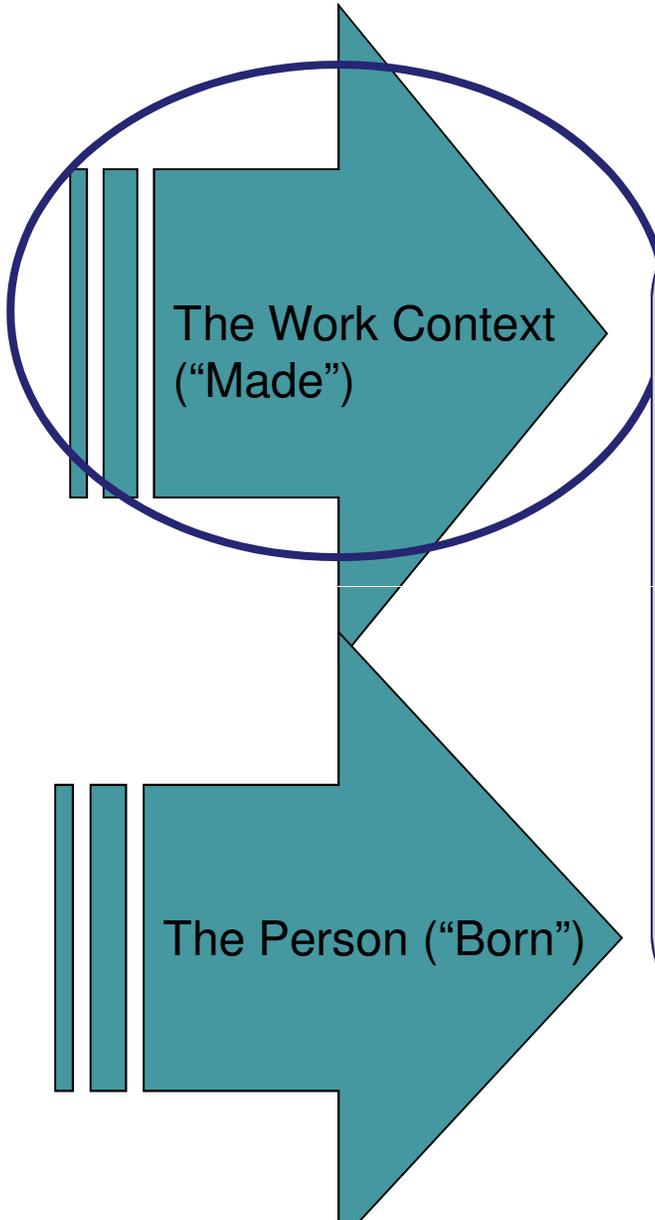


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Proactive motivation

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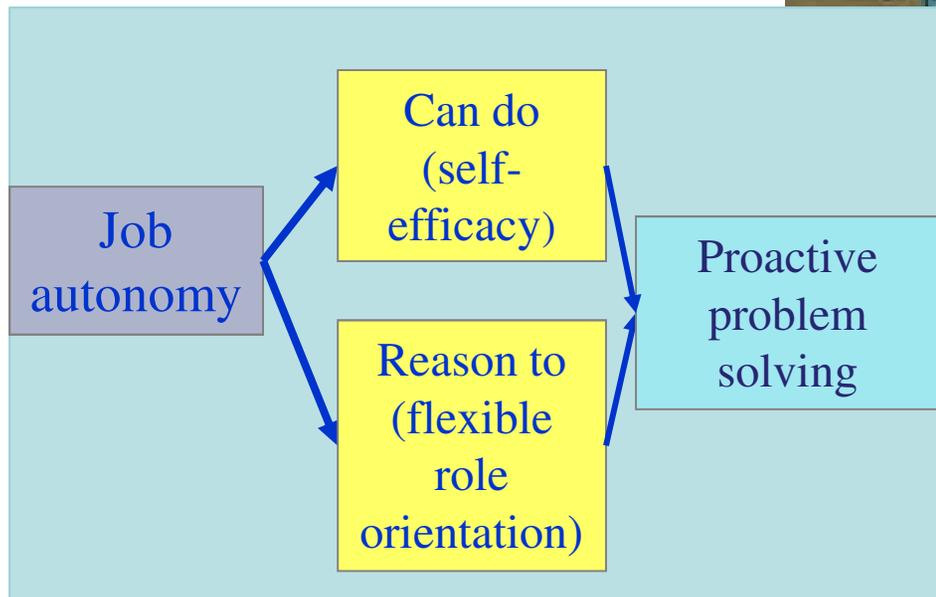
Proactive behavior



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Work Context 1 *Enriched Jobs*



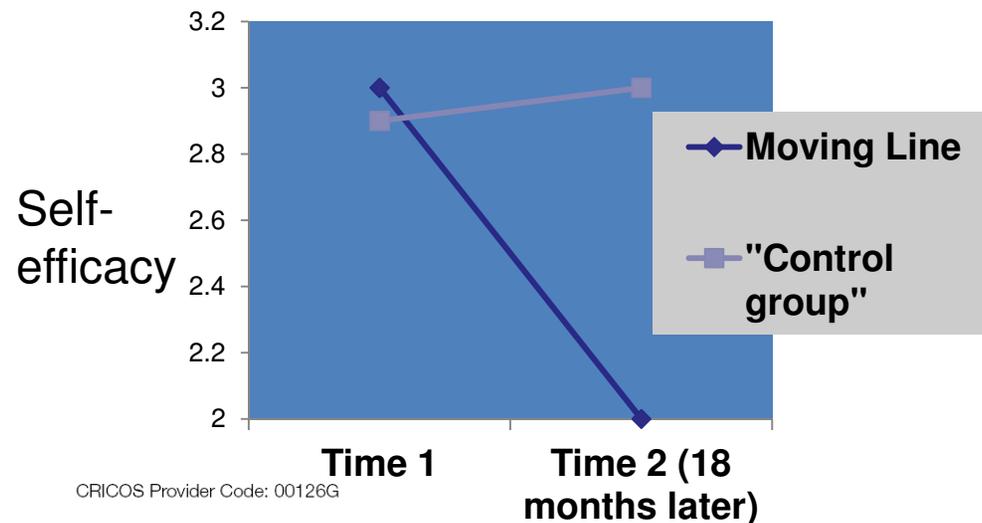
Example: What does de-skilling do to truck-makers proactive motivation?



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“to enable people to make decisions at the lowest point of knowledge, which will increase commitment & motivation...”
(from Company Values)



Parker, SK. (2003)



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Work Context 2 *Leadership: Vision*



Example: Who becomes more proactive during change?



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Self-efficacy
(Can do)

+



Clear Leader Vision
(Reason to)



Growth in
proactivity
over 12
months

- Neither self-efficacy alone nor vision alone led to growth in proactivity; both were needed



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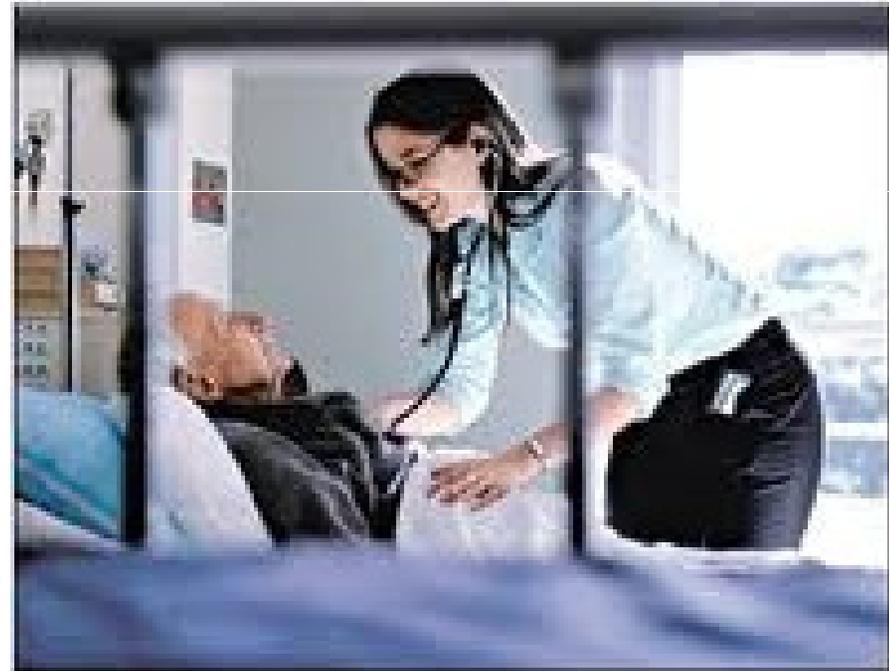
Work Context 3 *A Supportive Climate*





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Example : Will support enhance the proactivity of junior doctors?

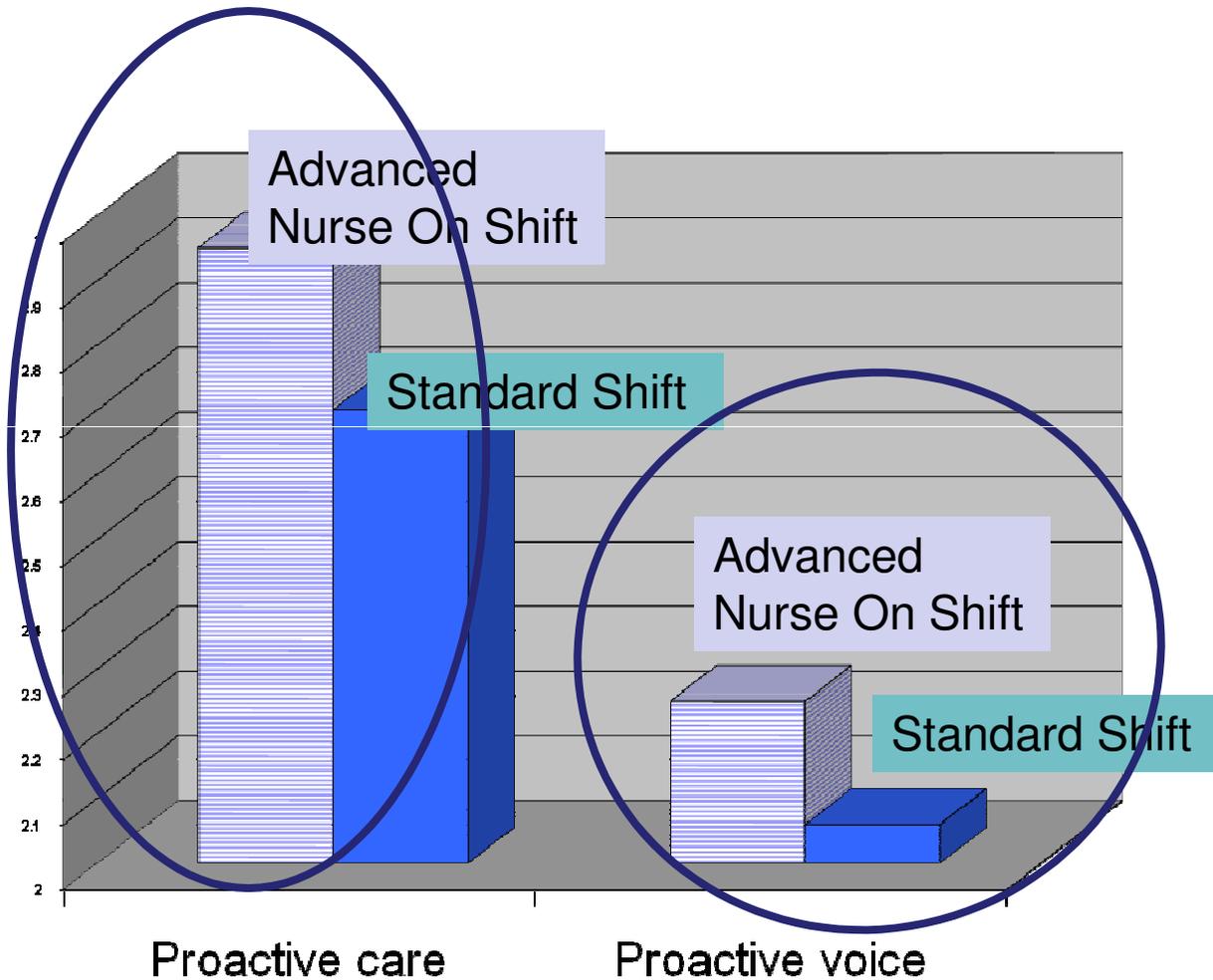


CRICOS Provider Code: 00126G

Parker, Johnson, Collins,
Hong, (2010)



Greater proactivity when advance nurse provided support on the shift

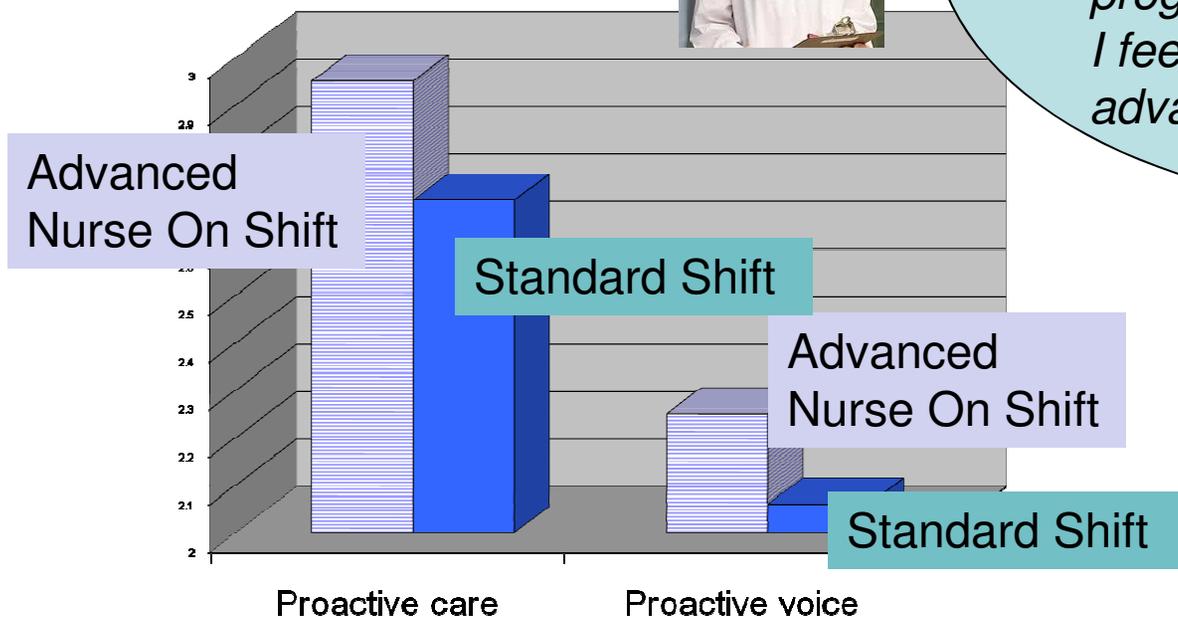




“Will coach us through things, asking us “what equipment will you need in this situation”, and saying ‘ I am a hundred percent behind you in this” Gives you a lot of confidence “ (can do)



You can't admit mistakes to senior doctors... junior doctors tend to shut up & don't say anything, if you want to stay or progress in this hospital. I feel OK talking to the advanced nurse” (can do)





The Work Context ("Made")

- Enriched jobs
- Leader vision
- Supportive climate

The Person ("Born")

Proactive motivation

Can do

- Self-efficacy

Reason to

- Internalized motivation

Energized to

- Activated positive affect

Proactive behavior



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Interventions to enhance proactivity



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- Evaluation of “Active Workforce Initiative”
 - UK Police Force and National Health Service Trust
 - Proactivity increased after 3 days training and some coaching (Strauss & Parker, under review)



- Leadership development programs at Accelerated Learning Laboratory@UWA

Coaching?



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- Coaching: Individual leader/employee's *own* proactivity
 - Awareness/ reflection
 - Use model to address motivational forces
 - e.g., **REASON TO**: Future Work Self, then identify discrepancy, then set goals
 - Encourage crafting to shape better job/ context
- Coaching: Leader's capability to *generate proactivity in others*
 - Understanding the 'risk' involved
 - Use the model to understand motivational forces
 - E.g., **CAN DO**: Building self-efficacy
- Supporting diagnostic tools



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Is proactivity
always
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Proactivity can go awry



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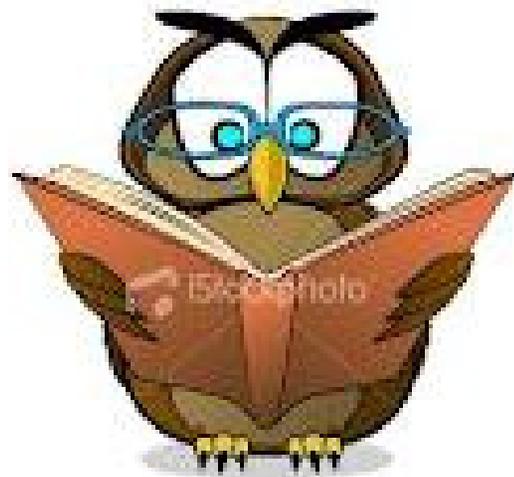


Challenges to get proactivity right



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- The “proactivity paradox”
- Lots of rules risks suppressing proactivity altogether
- Our approach is to cultivating **wise proactivity**



Australian
Research Council
project

Dr Jenny Liao

In conclusion....



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*“There are three ways people
behave at work:
making things happen,
watching what happens, and
wondering what happened”*

The Work Context

- Enriched jobs
- Leader vision
- Supportive climate

Proactive motivation

*Can do
Reason to
Energized to*



Proactive behavior



~~“IT’S TOO COLD”~~
~~“IT’S TOO EARLY”~~
~~“IT’S TOO HOT”~~
~~“IT’S TOO LATE”~~

MAKE IT HAPPEN.



you
make it
happen

**The question isn't who is going to let me,
it's who is going to stop me....**

Ayn Rand

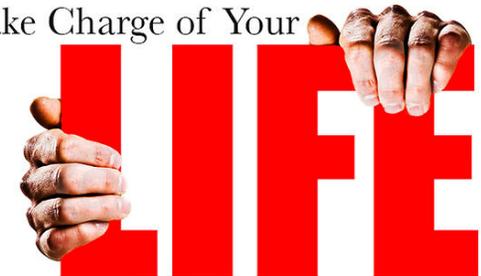
Habit 1
Be Proactive



You're in Charge!

CHICUS Provider Code: UU1204

Take Charge of Your



Thanks for Listening!

[https://sites.google.com/site/
profsharonparker/](https://sites.google.com/site/profsharonparker/)