



by ideologies in good or bad ways. Through all that we get to know the real and often hidden danger of a work culture. The real danger is in the misunderstanding of empathy: "Empathy, and care and concern for the well-being of others, are routine parts of most people's character. Yet they are in danger of being crowded out by exclusive concern for self-interest - a concern that is encouraged by the incentive-based structure of the workplace." The real danger is in the ignorance of personal power (I'm not Tony Robbins) and playing safe: "Acts of commitment happen occur routinely. They hold society together. But because of the self-fulfilling character of ideology, we should not be sanguine that they will persist. We should not be confident that the distortion that dominates current thinking about work and workers will reveal itself and be corrected as the sciences of human nature progress. Unless there is a collective effort to combat this ideology, we will all become the lazy, selfish pursuers of self-interest, not just in work but in our lives as a whole, that at least some social scientists have assumed we always were." The real danger is in the subtle contradictions of humanity: "Theories about human nature can actually produce changes in how people behave. What this means is that a theory that is false can become true simply by people believing it's true. The result is that, instead of good data driving out bad data and theories, bad data change social practices until the data become good data, and the theories are validated." That's one of my favorite quotes from the book. It really should make us think about what everyone of us could do to facilitate a better work culture. And there's simply no way that it's none of your business - once you're in, there's no way out (unless you quit).

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent exploration of how work works

By Bob Greaves, audio engineer, professor

This book offers an insightful explanation of how our perspective about work and human nature can be seductively but falsely self confirming. And it asserts we have actually created and embraced a counterproductive approach to work and the incentives intended to enhance our efforts become the truth we live to. Read it to explore the author's suggested alternative.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Schwartz is great - his book is average

By Doug

I have read two other books by Schwartz (The Paradox of Choice and Practical Wisdom) - I consider both of them to be two of my favorites. He is a true scientist who brings clear thinking to things like why too many choices can hurt us, psychologically. Why We Work did not meet my expectations. I was excited to read it because of my feelings about his earlier books but this one let me down. There does not seem to be anything new beyond what Edward Deci (popularized by Daniel Pink) has written. It feels like a ploy to capitalize on a really good Ted Talk.

An eye-opening, groundbreaking tour of the purpose of work in our lives, showing how work operates in our culture and how you can find your own path to happiness in the workplace. Why do we work? The question seems so simple. But Professor Barry Schwartz proves that the answer is surprising, complex, and urgent. We've long been taught that the reason we work is primarily for a paycheck. In fact, we've shaped much of the infrastructure of our society to accommodate this belief. Then why are so many people dissatisfied with their work, despite healthy compensation? And why do so many people find immense fulfillment and satisfaction through "menial" jobs? Schwartz explores why so many believe that the goal for working should be to earn money, how we arrived to believe that paying workers more leads to better work, and why this has made our society confused, unhappy, and has established a dangerously misguided system. Through fascinating studies and compelling anecdotes, this book dispels this myth. Schwartz takes us through hospitals and hair salons, auto plants and boardrooms, showing workers in all walks of life, showcasing the trends and patterns that lead to happiness in the workplace. Ultimately, Schwartz proves that the root of what drives us to do good work can rarely be incentivized, and that the cause of bad work is often an attempt to do just that. How did we get to this tangled place? How do we change the way we work? With great insight and wisdom, Schwartz shows us how to take our first steps toward understanding, and empowering us all to find great work.

Invoking plenty of Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Maynard Keynes, and even a bit of Bruce Springsteen, Schwartz's inspiring manifesto forces us to question the very nature of modern-day work. Via fascinating anecdote and plenty of data, the book forcefully claims that how we work isn't working. (HuffPost Books)

A concise 90-page treatise on work that should be required reading for every boss and manager. (Chicago Tribune)

Barry Schwartz has long been one of the most astute - and compassionate - observers of American life. In Why We Work, he makes a compelling case for building organizations that run with the grain of human nature rather than against it. If you want to make work more meaningful, for yourself or for your team, you need to read this wise and powerful book. (Daniel H. Pink, author of Drive)

In a masterful book that delivers a deep understanding why we work, Schwartz makes a convincing case that getting the answer wrong bears profound costs for employees and managers in any organization. A highly recommended, thought-provoking read. (Amy Wrzesniewski, Professor of Organizational Behavior, Yale University)

A meaningful look at why we've lost meaning at work, and where we can find it. (Adam Grant, Wharton professor and New York Times bestselling author of Give and Take)

A delightful, accessible book that glides across centuries of business and industry to reveal the underpinning moral foundations of how and why we work. If you have a job, or hope to have one, read Why We Work. (Laszlo Bock, Senior Vice President of People Operations at Google and author of

Work Rules!)"A call, in a few pointed words, for an expanded, genuine work ethic." (Kirkus)"Over the next very few years, computerization and automation will rapidly displace millions of white-collar workers" Why We Work outlines how profoundly disruptive these developments will be for a culture based, as ours is, on the work ethic as a central source of our personal worth. Fortunately, Schwartz also shows us how we can restore a sense of intrinsic value to whatever we choose to do with our time when the machines take over. (Elle)"This is a wonderfully lucid and compelling book that should be required reading for those who want to take up the challenge of creating organizations that allow for the richer and more meaningful aspects of human nature to flourish. It's also a useful tool to introspect on why you work and how, in everything you do, you might take steps towards cultivating a more meaningful and fulfilling life" anyone wishing to make their lives and the world a better place would do well to take this Labor Day to consider Why We Work. (The Psych Report)"Packed into 100 pages, that's a lot to digest and it made my thoughts race as I was reading. Yes, there are surprises in this book, along with practicality presented freshly. I don't necessarily think this is a top-down book; workers in the trenches might find some inspiration here, too. If that's what you need to make work better, then grab Why We Work and check it out. (PBG Lifestyle)"A terse and engaging book" a fine book. (Forbes.com) About the Author Barry Schwartz is a professor of psychology at Swarthmore College and the author of Why We Work, The Paradox of Choice, and Practical Wisdom. His articles have been published in The New York Times, The New York Times Magazine, the Chronicle of Higher Education, Parade Magazine, USA TODAY, Advertising Age, Slate, Scientific American, The New Republic, Harvard Business Review, and The Guardian, and he has appeared on dozens of radio shows, including Morning Edition, Talk of the Nation, Anderson Cooper 360, and CBS Sunday Morning. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Why We Work INTRODUCTION The Crucial Question Why do we work? Why do we drag ourselves out of bed every morning instead of living lives composed of one pleasure-filled adventure after another? What a silly question. We work because we have to make a living. Sure, but is that it? Of course not. When you ask people who are fulfilled by their work why they do the work they do, money almost never comes up. The list of nonmonetary reasons people give for doing their work is long and compelling. Satisfied workers are engaged by their work. They lose themselves in it. Not all the time, of course, but often enough for that to be salient to them. Satisfied workers are challenged by their work. It forces them to stretch themselves—to go outside their comfort zones. These lucky people think the work they do is fun, often in the way that doing crossword puzzles or Sudoku is fun. Why else do people work? Satisfied people do their work because they feel that they are in charge. Their workday offers them a measure of autonomy and discretion. And they use that autonomy and discretion to achieve a level of mastery or expertise. They learn new things, developing both as workers and as people. These people do their work because it's an opportunity for social engagement. They do many of their tasks as part of teams, and even when they're working alone, there are plenty of opportunities for social interaction during work's quiet moments. Finally, these people are satisfied with their work because they find what they do meaningful. Potentially, their work makes a difference to the world. It makes other people's lives better. And it may even make other people's lives better in ways that are significant. Of course, few occupations have all these features, and none, I suspect, have all these features all the time. But features of work like these are what get us out of the house, get us to bring work home with us, encourage us to talk about our work with others, and make us reluctant to retire. We wouldn't work if we didn't get paid, but that's not at the core of why we do what we do. And in general, we think that material rewards are a pretty bad reason for working. Indeed, when we say of someone that "he's in it for the money," we are not merely being descriptive; we're passing judgment. These diverse sources of satisfaction from work raise some very big questions. Why is it that for the overwhelming majority of people in the world, work has few or none of these attributes? Why is it that for most of us, work is monotonous, meaningless, and soul deadening? Why is it that as capitalism developed, it created a model for work in which opportunities for the nonmaterial satisfactions that might come from it—and inspire better work—were reduced or eliminated? Workers who do this kind of work—whether in factories, fast-food restaurants, order-fulfillment warehouses, or indeed, in law firms, classrooms, clinics, and offices—do it for pay. Try as they might to find meaning, challenge, and room for autonomy, their work situation defeats them. The way their work is structured means that there really is little reason to do these jobs except for pay. According to a massive report published in 2013 by Gallup, the Washington, D.C.-based polling organization, there are twice as many "actively disengaged" workers in the world as there are "engaged" workers who like their jobs. Gallup has been measuring international employee satisfaction for almost two decades. In total it has polled 25 million employees in 189 different countries. The latest version gathered information from 230,000 full-time and part-time workers in 142 countries. Overall, Gallup found that only 13 percent of workers feel engaged by their jobs. These people feel a sense of passion for their work and they spend their days helping to move their organizations forward. The vast majority of us, some 63 percent, are not engaged. We are checked out, sleepwalking through our days, putting little energy into our work. And the rest of us are actively disengaged, actually hating our jobs. In other words, work is more often a source of frustration than one of fulfillment for nearly 90 percent of the world's workers. Think of the social, emotional, and perhaps even economic waste that this statistic represents. Ninety percent of adults

spend half their waking lives doing things they would rather not be doing at places they would rather not be. The questions Gallup asks capture many of the reasons for work I just listed. The opportunity to do our work "right"; to do our best, to be encouraged to develop and learn, to feel appreciated by coworkers and supervisors, to feel that our opinions count, to feel that what we do is important, and to have good friends at work are all aspects of work that the survey taps. And for the overwhelming majority of people, work falls short—very short. The question is why? This book will offer an answer.